THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

I. THE RISE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND THEIR FAITH
By The Rev. L. Elliott Binns, D.D.

THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
By The Ven. J. W. Hunkin, B.D., O.B.E., M.C.

EARLY TRADITIONS ABOUT JESUS
By The Rev. J. F. Bethune-Baker, D.D., F.B.A.

The three parts are issued separately

EARLY TRADITIONS ABOUT JESUS

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WHAT THE GOSPELS ARE AND HOW THEY CAME TO BE

EARLY TRADITIONS ABOUT JESUS

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT THE GOSPELS ARE AND HOW THEY CAME TO BE

We have seen something of the Church actually in being—the people of whom it was composed—what Christians thought and did, how they lived—all that can be inferred from the special subjects chosen out by the missionaries who had won them over to their own belief.

We do not know how much they all knew or told about the life of Jesus, and it seems probable that their attention was fixed on Him more as they believed He was then, in the heavens, seated on the right hand of God, than as He had been on earth. Though He had lived on earth, it was what He had become, what they felt He was to them in their lives day by day, and what He was to shew Himself in the future, that inter-

ested them most. He was God's Son and His Christ. He was already reigning, not only in the heavens above, but also deep in their own hearts by His influence on them; and they believed that He was to come again to the world visibly and act as judge and establish the reign of God on earth. To men and women who believed this, the wonder was that He had ever really lived in the world as a man, like one of us—that He had been born, and learned things, and played, and had a trade, and been tired and anxious and troubled, not altogether successful in what He wanted to do, and at last 'brought to the gallows'. The wonder was how one who had so high a place in God's purpose for the world could have lived so lowly a life and suffered as Jesus did.

Yet all this was part of the good news about God and Man that was at the root of the life of the first Christians; and from the beginning stories were told about Jesus and passed about from one to another, to shew what He was like in His lifetime. There were anecdotes of His doings and His ways of looking at things, char-

acter sketches (some of them thumb-nail sketches in their proportion) and striking sayings, which gradually were collected together.

We do not know when collections of this kind began to be made, or how they were made. Probably some of the earliest disciples made for their own use a kind of anthology or 'golden treasury' of sayings that specially appealed to them.

We know that this was done at a later time by Christians living in Egypt in the second century, for a few years ago out of the rubbish heaps of their houses bits of little books written in Greek on the papyrus rolls, of which books were made, were dug up, and some of them were found to contain a number of short sentences beginning with 'Jesus says'. Only one of these sayings is exactly the same as any that are in our Gospels; but some of them may have been copied from one of these early collections; or they may have been 'good sayings' which the writer of the little book had heard repeated, like the one which we only know because St Paul is said to have quoted it to the elders at Ephesus, bidding them 're-

member the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts xx, 35).

Teachers, too, would find it convenient not to have to depend on memory only for their anecdotes and stories, but to make collections of stories in writing as well as of sayings. These they would use in their missionary work, now about one thing and now about another, and those that were found most useful for the purpose of winning converts and answering their questions would survive. When St Luke, many years later, composed his Gospel, he says in his preface (Lk. i, 1-4) that by the time he wrote there had been many attempts made to draw up accounts of what had happened, and that he himself had undertaken his task so that converts might know for certain about the things in which they had been instructed. Probably some of the narratives to which he refers were little more than such collections of anecdotes and sayings. A parallel might be found in the case of St Francis of Assisi. Very soon after his death a collection of stories about him was made.

Perhaps one of the first of all these little 'Christian' books, out of which our Gospels grew, was a collection of passages from the Old Testament (which for some time was the Christians' only 'Bible')—passages which were believed to point to Jesus and find fulfilment in Him. Peter in his early sermons, reported in Acts (ii, 25 and iii, 22), spins out his theme from Old Testament texts. Probably some such collection was used by St Paul and it or one like it is at the back of the Gospel according to St Matthew with its constant references to the fulfilment of Scripture.

None of these earliest collections, whether of sayings or of stories about Jesus, has survived. No doubt they contained stories of varying degrees of historical and religious value. The later 'apocryphal' gospels shew that there was a kind of underworld of early Christianity in which the love of the marvellous ran riot, and stories about Jesus were believed which are to us incredible and wholly unworthy to be connected with Him. The best of the earliest collections of sayings and stories were, we may be sure, for the most

part, incorporated in our Gospels,[1] and then superseded by these larger books with their fuller narrative. It is a sign of the high religious level of the main body of the early Church that the Gospels which were thus selected are as free from unworthy stories as they are.

Nor again has any early collection of passages from the Old Testament been preserved, though the use of such collections by early writers in defence of Christianity can be traced, and a collection with the title 'Testimonies' (or 'Evidences') has come down to us among the works of Cyprian who was bishop of Carthage in the middle of the third century.

Our first 'Gospel', that of St Mark, occupies a position intermediate between the earliest collections of sayings and stories and the full narratives of the Gospels of St Luke and St Matthew.

[1] No doubt there were in circulation isolated stories equally good which never got into our Gospels, like the story of the man working on the sabbath to whom Jesus said: 'Man, if thou knowest what thou art doing, blessed art thou, but if thou knowest not, accursed'—which is found in one of the great manuscripts (D) after Lk. vi, 4. Another of these floating stories is the one about the adulteress, which has been preserved by being inserted in the Gospel according to St. John (vii, 53-viii, 11), though it is absent from all Greek manuscripts of the Gospel earlier than the eighth century except D.

The heart of it is the story of the Passion. A third of the whole Gospel is taken up with a narrative of the doings and sayings of the last week of the life of Jesus. Its main purpose was not to be a 'life' of Jesus, or even a 'biography', but to trace back the Christian movement to its beginnings in the religious revival of John 'the Baptizer': to shew Jesus as the successor of John and the Hebrew prophets, in line with them and the hopes of Israel (as figured in the Old Testament). But in doing this the author has a scheme in mind. He gives a series of pictures of Jesus set in a kind of framework of a life, shewing His early hopes and success, the opposition to Him, and the end; and he sets it out apparently as a year's crowded work, bringing stories and parables and sayings together to illustrate his theme.

It is thus not intended to be a life or a history so much as the announcement of a Gospel—a good news, not only brought by Jesus Christ, but about Him, of which He is as it were the centre. It is meant to describe a plan of salvation for men, which goes back to the promises of the Old

Testament and has its fulfilment in Jesus, the Messiah.

It gives us a point of view of Jesus that probably represents an impression of what He was in his lifetime produced on someone, who had stories told by an actual follower to go on, but had not himself been present. The stories had been told often, and possibly the editor of the Gospel, besides providing the historical framework for them, added to them some touches of his own. It is possible that if we had been present at some of the incidents we should not have given quite the same account of them. But we have nothing earlier by which we can test Mark's accounts.

Many scholars think it probable that Mark had a Roman audience in view when he wrote his Gospel, and that he aimed at painting a picture of Jesus which would appeal to Romans.

Thus he depicts Jesus as the unconventional Jewish prophet, who overrode the petty rules which barred Romans from accepting the Jewish religion.

Again, in a world which went in very real

dread of evil spirits, he shews Jesus as the demon-conquering deliverer.

And, again, if this view is right, the Roman public for which he wrote was one that expected nothing from the official religion of the State, and had turned for religious consolation to cults of oriental origin, in which the founder was believed by his own physical sufferings to have won for himself the favour of the gods, and a blessed immortality after death for all who were initiated into the rites he had appointed. So Mark presents the picture of the suffering Son of God, greater than any of the deified heroes of these oriental religions because the appeal His sufferings make is not so much physical as spiritual and moral.

There are no stories in Mark about the birth and early life of Jesus. As 'the beginning of the Gospel' there is set before us the strange figure of John, a prophet living in the desert and preaching a new baptism which is described as one of 'repentance' with a view to the 'remission of sins'. We are introduced to Jesus as already a grown man, caught by the religious revival of

this John 'the Baptizer' and coming to him to be baptized. We are told nothing of any of the hopes and fears, or thoughts and plans, of Jesus in His youth and early manhood, which must have led up to the decisive moment when He responded to the appeal of the preaching of the Baptizer and so enrolled Himself as one of John's disciples. And even after His baptism and the Temptation in the Wilderness, according to this Gospel, it was not until John had been arrested and put in prison that Jesus began His own preaching and ministry. John had regarded himself as simply the herald of one mightier than he was. He aimed at shaking people out of their easy-going ways and making them conscious of their religious needs, so that they might be ready to receive the greater prophet when He came. And when Jesus first came before the public, He seemed to accept for Himself the position of John's successor and pointed back to the preparatory ministry of John in the words, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand' (Mk. i, 15).

The later Gospels (Luke and Matthew), both

of which use Mark as one of the main sources of their narratives, and between them include nearly everything that is in Mark, aim at supplementing Mark's account of the Life by a genealogical tree and by traditions of the family of Jesus and His birth and early childhood, so as to give what was expected in a biography; and they add fresh incidents and sayings and teaching. The authors of them write in better Greek style than Mark, and in what they take over from him they both make a good many little changes of words and expressions to produce a more literary effect. They also save space for their new matter by shortening some of Mark's picturesque accounts of incidents; and sometimes they alter his accounts for another reason—because they seemed to them to give a wrong impression of what Jesus said or did or thought about Himself, or else of what other people thought about Him and of what they ought to think. Matthew does this more than Luke.

For example, in the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Mk. x, 17 ff.; Lk. xviii, 18 ff.; Mt. xix, 16 ff.), Mark (Luke too) gives the question as

'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' and the reply of Jesus as 'Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God'. It is possible that Jesus may have had a deeper meaning, but His words seem to repudiate the title 'good' as addressed to Him, and Matthew changes the question to 'Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' and the answer to 'Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good'.

Again in the story of the Rejection at Nazareth (Mk. vi, 1-6; Mt. xiii, 54-58), Mark says that Jesus 'could not do any mighty work' there, beyond healing a few sick folk, and that He was surprised at their lack of faith; thus implying that He tried and failed. But Matthew changes Mark's 'could not do any' into 'did not do many', and implies that their lack of faith was the reason why He would not do many such works (Mk. iii, 19-30; Lk. xi, 14-23; Mt. xii, 22-32).

Again, Mark records an occasion (Mk. iii, 19-30) when a crowd had come to hear Jesus at an early stage in His ministry and His friends

went out to bring Him home, 'for they said, He is beside himself'.[1]

Neither Luke nor Matthew (Lk. xi, 14-23; Mt. xii, 22-32) thought fit to record the episode which Mark narrates as an introduction to his account of the charge brought by the scribes that it was by the help of Beelzebub, or Satan, the prince of the demons, that Jesus was able to cast out demons. Instead, they both link this charge with a particular case of the cure of a demoniac by Jesus, and they omit the insinuation that Jesus Himself was out of His mind which Mark records (iii, 22, 'He hath Beelzebub', i.e. He is possessed of a demon, and again, verse 30, 'they said, He hath an unclean spirit').

In another case it is only Luke who leaves out a story that has always been difficult to understand and is more like some of the stories in the apocryphal gospels. It is the story of the curs-

[1] The passage has usually been understood to mean that it was His friends who thought He was 'out of his mind'. The Greek words used are like our phrase 'his people', and immediately after his account of the incident Mark (verse 31) mentions 'his brethren and his mother' as coming and calling Him. But it is possible that the phrase 'they said' is used in Mark of a general rumour (like *on disait*), 'people were saying'; and, if so, His own family may only have come to see what was the matter.

ing of the fig-tree which is told both by Mark (xi, 12-14 and 20-25) and by Matthew (xxi, 18-22). Luke, however, instead of it, records in another place the parable of the Barren Fig-Tree—a lesson of mercy and patience, 'giving it another chance'.

These examples shew the kind of freedom that Luke and Matthew allowed themselves, in dealing with the written narratives of Mark which were before them, and in presenting their portraits of Jesus and the details of the history of His life and teaching. Mark's Gospel as a whole is more naïve and primitive in these ways than theirs are. It is like a private venture. Luke's is a much more carefully planned literary composition, and Matthew's has more the air of an ecclesiastical document expressing the official point of view. It was, as a matter of fact, the Gospel most widely used in the early Church.

Luke and Matthew add also, to what is narrated in Mark, accounts of the appearance of Jesus after His death. Just as Mark's Gospel contains no account of the birth and early years

of the life of Jesus, so it contains nothing more about the Resurrection than the announcement of the 'young man' 'arrayed in a white robe' to the women at the tomb that He was risen and that His disciples should see Him in Galilee.[1]

From the point of view of a complete life of Jesus Mark's Gospel lacks ending as it lacks beginning; and Luke and Matthew, in their accounts of the appearances of Jesus, supply what

[1] Mark's Gospel ends abruptly at verse 8 of chapter xvi, with the words 'for they were afraid'. It seems to us a strange ending to a Gospel; yet it is certain from the evidence of early manuscripts, and from the style and contents of the verses themselves, that verses 9-20 of this chapter are not the work of Mark but were added later to supply what was felt to be wanting as an end to the Gospel. It is possible, of course, that Mark wrote more and that the original ending of his Gospel, written on a roll of papyrus, was accidentally lost, as the last page of a paper-bound book of our own times may be. If this was the case, Matthew (who follows Mark closely in his narrative of the Passion) may have had a complete copy before him and the 'lost ending' may be incorporated in Matthew's conclusion. But if so he must have dealt very freely with what he found in Mark. If, for example, Mt. xxviii, 8 is compared with Mk. xvi, 8, it will be seen that Matthew's account of what the women did is directly opposed to Mark's; and the remaining verses of Matthew's Gospel contain so much that is specially characteristic of him, and unlike Mark, that we cannot with any security reconstruct from them the 'lost ending' of Mark. Nor can we hope to recover it from Luke, for he evidently breaks away from Mark (cf. Lk. xxiv, 6 and Mk. xvi, 7) and depends on different traditions for the rest of his Gospel.

was needed to account for the faith of Christians in Jesus and the existence of the Church; though the differences between their accounts, alike as to place and persons and circumstances, shew that, while a number of stories about the Resurrection were current, there was no fixed tradition as to the exact facts.

As regards all the additions that Luke and Matthew make to what they found in Mark, it must be remembered that, though their Gospels are later, some of the stories they tell may be quite as valuable for the history of Jesus as those in Mark; and the matter common to them both (other than what they derived from Mark), which consists mainly of teaching, may represent or be derived from one of the early collections of sayings and discourses of Jesus referred to above. Such a collection may even have been known by the author of Mark, though he made little use of it. We must draw from this matter common to Matthew and Luke to supplement the picture of Jesus presented in Mark. The book in which this common matter is generally assumed to have existed by itself is called Q, and

from Mark and Q together we can reconstruct the picture of Jesus that Christians had before them thirty or forty years after His death.[1]

APPENDIX

There are other theories, e.g. that the Gospel of Matthew was written earlier than the Gospel of Luke, and used by Luke. But this is improbable on many grounds, and one of them is the different way in which the sayings are dealt with in the two Gospels. In Matthew they are to a large extent grouped together under subjects, as in the Sermon on the Mount. In Luke they are scattered all over the Gospel, and in a number of cases Matthew gives a saying twice over—both in connexion with some incident (like Luke) and also in his special collection that makes up the Sermon on the Mount. It seems much more

[1] Q represents the German *Quelle* (source). It is not certain that such a book ever existed, and all attempts to reconstruct it in detail are precarious. But the hypothesis (1) that there was such a book, in which sayings of Jesus were collected, and with them probably some stories of occasions with which the sayings were connected, and (2) that both Luke and Matthew used it, as they used the Gospel of Mark, accounts for the non-Marcan matter that is common to both of them, and the different uses they make of it, better than any other theory.

likely that the original collection was haphazard, and first put in order in Matthew, than that Luke should have had the systematic arrangement of Matthew before him and broken it up in his own Gospel.

We do not know who was the author of this collection of Sayings. It has been supposed that he was the Apostle Matthew, because of a statement made by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia about the middle of the second century, that Matthew composed 'the Logia' in 'Hebrew' (which means Aramaic—the form of Hebrew spoken in Palestine in the time of Jesus, and normally by Jesus Himself as we see from Mk. v, 41, xv, 34). As this book was composed in Aramaic, it was no doubt intended for the use of Jewish Christians in Palestine, and it has been suggested that Matthew, who under the name of Levi had been a collector of taxes and accustomed to carrying a notebook about with him, was just the man to have jotted down striking sayings at the time and made a book of them after. So, if 'the Logia' means 'the Sayings' or 'Discourses', the Greek translation of this book may have been the source from which both Luke

and the author of the Gospel according to Matthew got the sayings they have in common; and because the grouping of sayings in the latter Gospel makes them a more conspicuous part of this Gospel than they are of Luke's, it came to be called by the name of the author of the Book of Sayings on which a large part of it depended.

But it is not at all certain that 'logia' means 'sayings'. The word is used in ordinary Greek in the sense 'announcement', 'oracle'; and it is possible that the whole phrase of Papias does not mean 'sayings of the Lord' but 'announcements about the Lord', and that the book of Matthew to which he refers was a collection, not of what Jesus said, but of what was said about Him in the Old Testament. We know that Christians in early days eagerly searched the Scriptures (that is the Old Testament) for prophecies about the Messiah and any statement or description which they could apply to Jesus when they had become convinced that He was the Messiah, the Lord; and that they attached great importance to the fulfilment of these 'oracles' or 'prophecies' in the life of Jesus as evidence that He really was the Messiah.

Prophecies and their accomplishment figure largely in the Gospel of Matthew—the author sometimes alters Mark's account of an incident in order to bring it into closer conformity with some prophecy. (Compare, for example, Mk. xi, 1-7 with Mt. xxi, 1-7—a case in which the alteration is due to misunderstanding of the Hebrew idiom 'an ass, yea a colt the foal of an ass'.) So, if what Papias says means that the Apostle Matthew made a collection of such 'Messianic' oracles, and this collection was used by the author of the Gospel as the source of one of its most characteristic features, we can understand how the name of Matthew came to be associated with it and it was distinguished from the others as 'the Gospel according to Matthew'.

It is obvious that it is a more Jewish Gospel than the others and that it would appeal to Christians who were of Jewish origin and interested in the Jewish Scriptures and the Mosaic Law, and that it was written for them by one of themselves.

On the other hand, the Gospel of Luke was evidently written by a Christian of non-Jewish origin for his fellow Gentile Christians or other

Gentiles. He does not seem to have known Matthew's book on the Oracles, which probably was not translated into Greek when he wrote; and from the other collection of Sayings of Jesus, if it contained all that are in the Gospel of Matthew, he chose what were likely to interest Gentiles most.

There is another theory that has lately won the support of some imminent scholars, viz. that our Gospel according to St Luke is really a revised edition of an earlier Gospel which was compiled by Luke and was independent of Mark—a Gospel of Luke as original as the Gospel of Mark. Thus if Matthew is a new edition of Mark with a great deal of fresh material added, so our Luke would be a new edition of the original Luke with a great deal of Mark incorporated in it. And again as regards Matthew there has been suggested a similar theory of an original gospel independent of Mark. But these new theories have still to be subjected to detailed examination. To the writer of this sketch it does not seem likely that they will survive so as to take the place which the older theory has had in the general consensus of scholars of recent times. This

older theory at all events shews us clearly the different characteristics of our Gospels as they are.

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For study of the Gospels, either as literature or as history, a synopsis must be used, so that the narratives in the different Gospels can easily be compared one with another: e.g. (in Greek) A. Huck, *Synopse der drei ersten Evangelien,* 7th ed. 1928 (J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen); (in English) Burton and Goodspeed, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Scribners), in the version of 1881, or S. Mathews and E. J. Goodspeed, *The Student's Gospels* (University of Chicago Press, 1927), in an American translation.

The writer of this book assumes that anyone reading it will have before him a synopsis, or at least the text of the Gospels themselves, and will read the passages to which reference is made.

THE ACTUAL LIFE OF JESUS AS SET OUT IN MARK AND Q

CHAPTER TWO

THE ACTUAL LIFE OF JESUS AS SET OUT IN MARK AND Q

IT is on Mark and the matter common to Luke and Matthew that we shall depend mainly for description of the actual life of Jesus, and we begin with what we can learn of His own experience.

Mark describes as the first of His public acts the calling of the four fishermen, two sets of brothers (Simon and Andrew, and James and John the sons of Zebedee), to come with Him and fish for men (Mk. i, 16-20); and a busy day of miracles in Capernaum follows at once (Mk. i, 21-34). That is a day of instant success, there is faith-healing in a number of cases of sick folk. Then early next morning He goes out alone to a quiet place to pray; and, when His friends go in search of Him to bring Him back, He says

to them, 'Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth' (Mk. i, 35-38), or, as Luke expresses it (Lk. iv, 43), 'for therefore was I sent'.[1]

Here, at the outset of His public work, we are shewn the dominant motive of Jesus—the sense of 'mission'. He was sent into the world by God to do something, as a father might send a son. This sense of mission had been with Him for some time. No doubt the four young fishermen were already friends to whom He had talked of it and of the Kingdom of God of which He was to spread the news, and they were ready to join Him and help in the work when He thought the right moment had come. It came when John the Baptizer was arrested and put in prison. It was in connexion with the Baptizer's preaching and His own baptism by him that the sense that God had chosen Him for special work had been

[1] If these are really words of Jesus at the time, the meaning in Mark may be only 'I went forth', namely, from Capernaum, whereas Luke's phrase implies the sense of divine mission to preach. The whole incident, however, shews that Jesus had this sense.

brought vividly home to Him. 'Straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him: and a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased' (Mk. i, 10, 11).

It was a deep religious experience similar in kind to that which some men in all ages have had; and the form in which it is described is similar to the form in which the prophets of old described their own vocation, in terms of vision and voice.

Read, for example, Isaiah's account of his call (Is. vi): 'In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. . . . And I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people . . .'; or Jeremiah i, 4, 'Now the word of the LORD came unto me, saying . . .'; or Obadiah i, 'The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the LORD'; or yet again descriptions in which vision and voice are combined and blended in the very expression of the experience, such as Is. i,

1, 'The *word* that Isaiah the son of Amos *saw*'—an expression to which there is a parallel in the New Testament too, 'And I turned to *see the voice* which spoke with me' (Rev. i, 12). Indeed, the same kind of experience is described throughout the New Testament in the same way. In 'religious' experience we are not dealing with the world of sensation, with what can be touched and seen and heard, but with the intangible, the invisible, the inaudible. It is a world in which 'seeing' is 'hearing' and 'hearing' is 'seeing'. Some people might still say, 'I seemed to see' or 'I seemed to hear a call'—they would not say, 'I saw' or 'I heard a voice'. (If anyone today, when he is awake and fully conscious, thinks that he sees things or hears voices that others who are present do not see or hear, it is a symptom of grave disorder of body or of mind.) Most of us nowadays, in describing such religious experiences as we may have had, would say, 'I felt' or 'it flashed upon me', 'the idea came to me', 'it was borne in upon me' or 'I was convinced that I must do this or that'. We should be much less picturesque in our language than religious people were in old

days and have been since when they were under the influence of the descriptions in the Bible.

We must distinguish between the fact of the individual experience, the fact, that is, of the inward call or vision or resolve, and the description of it as if it were something that happened in the outward world of sense and sound.

The account in Mark describes Jesus only (not anyone else) as 'seeing' and 'hearing'. Luke, who seems in all such cases to be trying to understand what would nowadays be called the psychological situation, says that the experience came to Jesus while He was praying. That may be an important clue for us. It is when we pray, when we 'lift up our hearts to God' and 'draw near' to Him, that He 'draws near' to us. When we try to bring our lives, our desires and temptations and doubts and difficulties, into contact as it were with the highest and best that we know or can conceive; then, just because there is something in us that is godlike and in touch with God, we are likely to see more clearly the way we ought to take and, as it were, to hear an answer that tells us what is right. There may come to

us something like Vision and Voice. It seems to be 'given' to us, and we receive it as from God.

If Mark's account is right, it was an experience like this that Jesus had at His baptism, and He must have told what He felt, and described it in this way, to some of His friends; and they must have told it again as they remembered it; and so the story came to Mark. It is likely that He had talked it over with Simon or Andrew or James and John, and they had discussed it together, and so were ready to leave their fishing and go with Him on a preaching tour at His bidding. In a modern biography we should be told this; but Mark in his Gospel hurries us on from incident to incident, and from picture to picture, with the words 'and straightway' as almost his only connecting link, and he hardly ever gives an explanation.[1]

[1] Explanations come in some of the later Gospels, and it is interesting to note how the editor of Matthew revised the earlier account, or how the story had grown by his time. It is said that a story loses nothing in the telling, but in this version of it a good deal of its freshness and life-likeness seems to be lost. Read Mt. iii, 13-17. Jesus, as depicted in Mark, is very human and unconventional. But the later account seems to be intended (1) to explain how it was that He of all people could come to a baptism

What is it then that the story means? It means that Jesus associated with His baptism by John the moment when He was flooded with the vivid consciousness of having received a special gift of spiritual insight, standing to God as son to a father, and being chosen and designated by God for a special purpose to carry out a mission in the world.

What was that mission? From the earliest stages of His work as actually described in Mark we could only say 'to preach and to cast out demons'. But a hint is dropped in the description of John's work as being to make ready the way of the Lord (Mk. i, 3), with reference to a prophecy that was believed to refer to the Messiah who was to come; and what the preaching was about is plainly stated as the 'gospel of God' and the nearness of 'the kingdom of God' (Mk. i, 14, 15).

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of repentance unto remission of sins, and (2) to guard against the idea that He could have had any sense of needing forgiveness. He came in order to leave nothing 'righteous' undone. And (at least in what are regarded as the best texts) the Vision and the Voice are represented not as being an inner experience of Jesus alone, but as incidents for all to see and hear ('the heavens were opened', and not 'Thou art' but 'This is my beloved son'—an audible proclamation).

Although it was as a faith-healer that Jesus first attracted attention, He had His purpose and teaching clear from the beginning. The healing of the sick, though it has so large a place in our Gospels, was only a consequence—an outward sign or a visible effect—of the impression produced by the new teaching (Mk. i, 27) and the new prophet's personality. The preaching must have been about the near approach of the new era which John the Baptizer had proclaimed, the coming of the Kingdom of God, when all the powers of evil would be subdued and good would be dominant in the world. And the conviction with which Jesus preached this good news, and the authority with which He spoke of the power and goodness of God, roused in some of those who saw and heard Him the same conviction. We shall have to consider later on what was meant by the Kingdom of God and what Jesus taught about it and its 'coming' and His own part in it. We note now only that it was the main theme of His teaching, and the object of His mission was to make people fit to be children of this Kingdom. So far as we can tell from the accounts we have

He seems to have had at different times different ideas as to the nearness of the new era and the way in which it would be brought about. We shall consider these later. But before He began to teach at all He had made up His mind as to how He was Himself to do the work He felt He was called by GOD to do.[1]

After His baptism, and the vivid feeling of sonship and mission He experienced at it, He wanted to be alone and went away by Himself 'into the wilderness'; and there in His retirement He thought it over, what it meant and what He was to do and how He was to do it. He passed in review the different ways in which success might be won, and those which His conscience rejected as unworthy He regarded as suggestions coming from the Devil.

We are face to face in the story of the Temptation with one of the most living and intimate pictures of Jesus we have. In telling it to His friends He took them completely into His confidence. He shewed them Himself, and how His

[1] Read Mk. i, 12, 13. And then the two stories (from Q), Lk. iv. 1-13 and Mt. iv, 1-11.

mind was working. It is possible that the experience was not only described by Him in the dramatic form of the story, but was actually felt by Him in the form in which He told it; as if the Devil came to Him and spoke and caught Him up and took Him to Jerusalem and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple. It would be a case like the 'visions' of the prophets, and the 'word of the Lord' coming to them. But that is only one of several possible descriptions of the actual experience. The real fact was the experience itself—the fact, that is, that Jesus felt Himself pulled towards things He knew to be wrong, things others had done and might do for the sake of success. He did not dally with them but faced up to them, and turned His back on them. He had conflicting ideals before him and he chose between them. He passed through a moral conflict and decided on His line of action.

Some have thought that the words of the Voice at the Baptism, 'my beloved son', had a special sense to Jews at the time, and that if Jesus used them in telling the story it must have meant that He was already conscious that the mission en-

trusted to Him was to be that of the long expected Messiah. It has also been thought that the 'temptations' are of such a kind as would only suggest themselves to one who conceived himself to be called to fulfil in the world as it was the cherished ideas of the Jews as to what the 'redeemer of Israel' would be. In view of the fact that at the end of His life Jesus did not disown the charge that He thought He was the Messiah, it is not unnatural to suppose that He thought so at the beginning. But it is certain that His friends to whom He must have told the story did not understand from it that He thought He was the Messiah. And neither the phrase 'my beloved son' nor the character of the 'temptations' forces us to this conclusion. There is also good reason to think that the sense of mission with which Jesus began His public work was less definite and more experimental, and that the exact part He was to play, and what He was to be, became clearer to Him as His work went on. To assume that He had at the outset a full 'Messianic consciousness' might be to miss a large part of the real heroism of His life and its inspiration

for ourselves: the patience and hope and steady confidence in God which He preserved while He 'learnt from the things that he suffered', as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says of Him (Heb. v, 8). The word he uses means more than our word 'suffer'. It means what we mean by the word 'experience'. In this respect, like the rest of us, Jesus learnt from all the varied experiences of His life—this is how the writer to the Hebrews says He became able to sympathize with us. And in studying His life we shall do well to proceed on the assumption that while Jesus never lost the sense of sonship and mission that sprang to life at His baptism, the special meaning of His sonship and the special direction of His mission were determined by His actual experience and the course of events, from which He learnt stage by stage what was His Father's will.

Let us then read the story of the Temptation in the Wilderness as the account He gave of the conflict in His mind as to the course He ought to pursue and of the decisions to which He came. The Devil's lever is throughout the idea of son-

ship—not that He was the Messiah, but that He was a chosen 'son' of God. Are there not 'rights' that He can claim? Jesus thinks not of rights, but of responsibilities and loyalty. What kind of help can a 'son' properly expect from a Father-God, all-powerful and all-loving, who has set him a task to do? And what methods of action would have such a Father's approval?

First comes the question suggested by the need of the moment for food: He is hungry. Here is a natural instinct that craves satisfaction—no harm in it: He can have His fill at once. But part of the business of life is keeping the satisfaction of the natural instincts, that we share with all other animals, subordinate to higher considerations and making them serve the larger purposes of human (rather than merely animal) life. Jesus puts the things of the spirit first. It is the higher life that must be satisfied, even if the lower instincts are starved.

Then, if we follow the order of the story in Luke (though in experiences of this kind the sequence is of little moment), it is the 'will to power' that has to be faced. Not for His own

glorification—it is clear that Jesus was immune from any such vainglorious personal ambition—but for the sake of what He could do with it. If all the world were at His feet, all the authority of the world His, He could make men do what they ought to do. But Jesus knows this is not God's way of working. It is the way men have followed often, what we call the way of the world, the way of force; and Jesus decides that it is the Devil's way and that He would be no better than a devil-worshipper if He tried to follow it. The 'son' of God must work in God's way.

And again during His time of retirement there had come into His mind the thought that He might defy all dangers and trust to God to intervene and preserve Him for the work He was to do. He need take no precautions, have no regard to the conditions of ordinary life in the world, for God would see Him through. But Jesus will not harbour this thought. There is to be no royal road to success for Him. What He has to do, He has to do in the world as it is, and there can be no exemption for Him from the common lot.

It would be proof not of His faith in God, but of lack of faith, to put Himself in any position of danger from which only a miracle could save Him. It would be asking for a sign from heaven, putting God's power and love to a test through His own self-will or lack of proper care. So Jesus enters on His ministry resolved that His trust in His Father shall not mean any kind of attempt to force that Father's hand. He will use His own powers to the full and not expect what we now call the laws of Nature to be altered for His sake. He would work by natural human means, and depend on the good in the world and man and the power of truth to win its way.

'Forty days' was the time of Moses' sojourn on Mount Sinai in the story of the giving of the Law (Ex. xxiv, 18) and a conventional number with the Jews. During the time of His retirement Jesus took count of Himself and the facts of life in the world of His day, and He got His ideals and principles clear. He could not have called it a time of temptation if He had not felt something within Him drawing Him towards the ideas He rejected. It is not being tempted to

the gratification of lower instincts and aims that lowers a man, but yielding to the temptation or lingering over and harbouring the idea of gratification. Jesus emerged stronger in spirit from the experience to which the story says He was led by the Spirit. Until one has faced alternatives and made one's choice, one may be tossed like a shuttlecock from one to the other, and be the victim of the impulse of the moment. But when a decision is made, we have an ideal to live up to and a standard by which to act in future. For we are never free from temptations of the lower instincts, the body, the imagination, the mind.

It is a picture of life and the way to live that the story of the Temptation gives. One great decision on the right side at a crisis does not confer immunity from temptation ever afterwards. It was not so in the case of Jesus. As Luke puts it, the Devil 'departed from him for a season'. We are only given glimpses of the facts. One flash of light comes when He crushes Peter with the words, 'Get thee behind me, Satan' (Mk. viii, 33; Mt. xvi, 23; omitted by Luke). Peter was trying to dissuade Him from suggesting to

the people the idea that the Messiah would have to suffer many things, and be rejected, and be killed. No one, Peter thought, would believe in a Messiah of that kind. The vigour of his Master's reply shews how real the temptation was—such as comes to many a man who has the ear of the public—to give the people what they wanted and so secure a popular success. Jesus would not win success by compromise or silence, when truth was at stake: but there was temptation. And Luke (this time alone on the other side) records a saying of Jesus towards the end of His life to the disciples: 'Ye are they who have continued with me [been constantly with me] in my temptations' (Lk. xxii, 28). He could look back on His whole career as a succession of moments of decision and choice in all of which there was a pull the wrong way; and the disciples, many of whom must have shared some of Peter's misgivings, are praised for their loyalty to their Master all through. It is of course decision after decision of this kind that shews up a man and makes him what he is. And again, at the very end, the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane

(Mk. xiv, 32-42) with the words, 'Father . . . remove this cup from me', and 'the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak', and 'pray that ye enter not into temptation', shews the shrinking from the fate that was threatening Him and the output of spiritual effort that was needed to overcome the strain, and bring Him to accept the issue as His Father's will. But the habit of a lifetime prevailed.

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THE WAY OF LIFE AND THE WAY OF TEACHING CHOSEN BY JESUS

CHAPTER THREE

THE WAY OF LIFE AND THE WAY OF TEACHING CHOSEN BY JESUS

As Jesus was born into a carpenter's home in a village of Galilee, so He probably followed a carpenter's trade there till He started out on His mission. After that, though He had His own home to go to, it was a wandering life from village to village and town to town that He led. He never went alone. He began, as we have seen, by gathering round Him a little group of men who went with Him, and sometimes at least there were women in the company. Though He kept in this way aloof from settled ties of place and work, He was not aloof from interest in ordinary life. He mixed freely with all sorts of people, and evidently liked them, good and bad, rich and poor, men and women and children. Wherever He went He made friends and accepted their hospitality, as in the case of Levi (or

Matthew). This is a striking instance of His friendliness and freedom from prejudice, for Levi was a tax-gatherer and represented the hated, foreign, Roman government. But Jesus, seeing somehow that Levi was attracted to Him, seized the opportunity and boldly called him to come with Him and then went to his house and Levi gave a dinner in His honour. Jesus accepted the hospitality of one with whom the scribes and Pharisees would not have sat at table, and when they protested He said that Levi and his friends were the very people He wanted to meet—He would go to those who needed Him.[1]

This was near Capernaum. Luke (xix, 1-10) tells another story of the same kind, at another place, Jericho, of another tax-gatherer, Zacchæus, a rich man, who had climbed up a tree in order to see Jesus as He passed by. Jesus has noticed what happened and at once hails him and asks for hospitality, quick to make the most of the chance of winning an 'outsider'. And when at the end of the visit (we are not told of the talks they must have had together mean-

[1] Read Mk. ii, 13-17; Lk. v, 27-32; Mt. ix, 9-13.

while) Zacchæus is won over to a new conception of honour and fair-dealing in his profession, and says he will make amends, Jesus at once claims him as a true scion of God's people; for this is what 'son of Abraham' means in this passage. It is like St Paul's description of the new society of Christians as 'the Israel of God' (Gal. vi, 16). It is not racial descent that counts, but faith in God and temper and spirit and attitude to life.

Jesus practised no austerities, though He gave up the comforts of ordinary settled home life. He was no ascetic like John the Baptizer, and other 'holy men' of other religions. One of the malicious charges levelled at Him by His opponents was that He ate and drank like other men, and made friends of undesirable people (Lk. vii, 34; Mt. xi, 19), instead of behaving as prophets and holy men were expected to behave.[1]

The strict discipline to which He put Himself was one of the mind and spirit. The hardships of the body He underwent were not sought out

[1] 'Gluttonous' is perhaps too strong as an equivalent of the Greek word, and 'sinners' may mean no more than people who were careless in observance of the Law.

by Him but incidental to the way of life He chose, and He chose that way of life as the one that fitted His purpose best. He was not like St Francis: He had no high station in the world and no riches to renounce. The renunciations He made were made for the sake of the special work He felt called to do. And though He sometimes summoned rich men and poor men alike, without distinguishing between them, to abandon their wealth or their work and ties with ordinary life and join Him in His mission, there were all exceptional cases. He never suggested that a life of poverty and simplicity was for all men the only way of living a religious life and being free from the cares of the world, though He startled His disciples by some of His sayings about the danger of being rich. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God' (Mk. x, 25; Lk. xviii, 25; Mt. xix, 24). When they heard this, they cried out: 'Then who can be saved?' It seemed to them that a man who had not to work for his living had a much better chance of being religious than others. According

to Mark, Jesus had already said that He meant those who trusted in riches in contrast with trusting in God, and when the crisis of choice confronted them chose treasure in the world rather than 'treasure in heaven'. He had been disappointed in the Rich Young Ruler (read the whole story in Mk. x, 17-31) and He had put the case against him as strongly as possible. But the case was not really hopeless, and so He corrects the disciples' too literal understanding of His words by declaring that 'all things are possible with God', and adding another saying of the same kind about the houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands that those who had left all and followed Him should receive instead. That would shew them what kind of hundred-per-cent. return for what they gave up for His sake He had in mind. They must not take what He said too literally; but it was true that people were always in danger of setting their hearts on the good things of the world and making them ends in themselves, and so missing the things that were of real abiding value; and to turn away from them altogether

might be the only way of entering into the Kingdom of God and eternal life. Jesus did not disparage ordinary life in the world and its opportunities of doing true service to God and of making good prevail; but for the moment He wanted with Him only those who were ready to give themselves up wholeheartedly to His work. It is in this sense that three of the most austere of His sayings are to be understood:—the sayings in Lk. ix, 57-62 and Mt. viii, 19-22 (from Q). These sayings are warnings, meant to test would-be disciples. If you come with me, there are no home comforts for you, you must attend to nothing but the work in hand, there must be no kind of drawing back. You must not count the cost of doing what you know you ought to do. Yet at other times (see Lk. xiv, 25-35) He could bid men count the cost and test themselves before they engaged in the great undertaking, as in the sayings about the builder of a tower and the king going to war that Luke records in explanation of the fiercely deterrent saying, 'If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren,

and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple'.

At the moment of that saying 'great multitudes' were going with Him. He wanted no half-and-half adherents, but picked men with Him, and He chose these startling words to make them understand how great were His demands. The saying seems to have been in Q, and Matthew gives it in the milder form, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me' (Mt. x, 37). Matthew may have toned down the harsher expression he found in Q; but, if he did, his version of the saying probably expresses what Jesus meant.[1] Both give, after this saying, another: 'Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple' (Lk. xiv, 27), 'And he that doth not take his cross, and follow after me, is not worthy of me' (Mt. x, 38)—a saying which they both also give in an-

[1] This is shewn again in the saying 'Who is my mother and my brethren? . . . whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother' (Mk. iii, 33-35; Lk. viii, 19-21; Mt. xii, 46-50).

other place in which they are copying Mark (Mk. viii, 34; Lk. ix, 23; Mt. xvi, 24) in another form: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me'. And these sayings shew what is really meant. The man who is centred in himself and thinking of himself, or even of his home and his family, first of all, cannot be a follower of Jesus. There can be no service without sacrifice. There must be self-renunciation, self-forgetfulness, and willingness to shoulder burdens, to do and dare, and endure and bear. Love means always giving without regard to getting. Yet Jesus adds that he who gives in this way will find that he gets:— in losing himself in this way he comes to the best he can be and to get the best he can have (Mk. viii, 35; Lk. ix, 24; Mt. xvi, 25).

It is easy to take these sayings as what is called world-denying or world-renouncing, implying that it is not possible to follow the Christian ideal while living an ordinary life in the world. Christians have taken them so, and some of the great ancient religions of the East are based on this belief. But it is important to notice

that, like much of the teaching of Jesus, these sayings were called out from Him by particular cases with which He had to deal. No doubt similar cases often arise, in which complete renunciation may be required; but to suppose that Jesus intended to lay down a universal rule to this effect is to ignore the general tenour of His teaching and of His own practice, according to which ordinary life in the world has moral worth and is the means, for most men at least, of forming character and attaining eternal life.

His message was not for the few, but for all. The way of life He taught was one that could be followed by everyone. He made no distinctions between rich and poor, learned and unlearned, class and station in life. The masses, like sheep without a shepherd (Mk. vi, 34), appealed to His compassion, and without waiting for them to come to Him, He went into the midst of them. The year or two of His life that our Gospels describe are crowded with journeyings and incidents. Sometimes the days were so full that 'they could not so much as eat bread' (Mk. iii, 20).

Jesus felt the strain of such a life, and though

amid the crowd of friends and opponents alike He was conscious of being sustained by His Father in Heaven, He must escape from them to the quiet of the lakeside and the mountain, and the desert, where He could have rest, time to think, and the closer communion with God that prayer affords. Luke, as we have seen (ch. ii) lays special stress on His habit of prayer and connects with prayer some of the chief crises of His life, the resolutions He made, the sense of confidence He had, and the fresh understanding and assurance that came to Him in times of doubt and despondence. The few instances that are given (e.g. Mk. i, 35) seem to shew that He was often away alone in the mountains, which still remain unspoiled in the holy land where, as someone has said, 'everything else seems changed and vulgarized to-day'. Sometimes He took with Him two or three of His company (Mk. ix, 2, before the Transfiguration; Mk. xiv, 33, in Gethsemane), and sometimes He took them all—'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile' (Mk. vi, 31).

His way of teaching in some respects was not

original. At first, at all events, in Galilee He went to the usual place of worship and spoke in the synagogue (Mk. i, 21, 39, iii, 1, vi, 2). This must have been by invitation of the officials in charge of the service. But after a time they resented, it seems, the freedom of His teaching and His unconventional ways, and the synagogues were no longer open to Him. We should gather this from the account in Mark (vi, 1-6) of his bad reception at Nazareth.[1]

Nor was the form He gave to His teaching new. Other teachers had made use of parables, and of startling sayings expressing some great truth in its extremest form, without any qualifications—now one great truth and now another. It was the way to arrest attention, and He used freely the ideas that were current among the people of His time and the picturesque strong speech

[1] Luke (iv, 16-30) makes a much fuller story of this episode, placing it at the very beginning of the ministry. He represents Jesus as already expecting hostility and provoking it, being cast out of the synagogue and only escaping a violent death by a miraculous disappearance. In doing this he is using a literary device and anticipating the actual order of history. He sets it as a prologue to his account of the ministry of Jesus in which he is to describe the rejection of Jesus by His own nation, and the way in which He triumphed over death by resurrection, and the gospel passed from the Jews to the Gentiles.

of epigram and poetic exaggeration, to make them think. A good example of this kind is the saying (from Q), 'if ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would obey you' (Lk. xvii, 6); or the other version of the saying that Matthew gives (Mt. xvii, 20), 'Ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove'. Everyone who heard Him at the time would have understood that the moving of trees and mountains was only a symbol of the great things that faith enabled a man to do. For faith the word 'impossible' does not exist; and though we do not take the saying literally, we must understand, as His hearers understood, that He meant to call men to unlimited faith in God and to assure them that there were no bounds to His love and power to help them, if only they would follow the way He pointed out, if mountains stand in the way, they shall be removed.

But besides this kind of teaching in public, in the open street and in the houses of friends, there are constant references to His teaching in pri-

vate. One of the most notable characteristics of His method was the forming of a group of men knit together by personal intimacy with one another and Himself. He must constantly have been in conversation with this group. They were not very quick-witted or intelligent. They did not always understand His teaching or His parables, and He explained to them in private (e.g. Mk. iv, 10), A good deal of what is most familiar to us in His teaching is said to have been given to this smaller group of His disciples, though sometimes the context shews that others besides were present; and there seems to have been an inner group of three, Peter and James and John, with whom He was in more intimate relations than with the rest.

Nor, again was His teaching in detail as new as it has seemed to some to be. Much of it is the natural outcome of the teaching of Hebrew prophets and psalmists and 'wise' men with which He was familiar, and plenty of parallels can be found in the sayings of later Jewish teachers, as well as in the teaching of Greek philosophers and moralists of which He would know nothing. But

never before had the character and personality of the Teacher been in such complete accord with His teaching that it seemed to come from Him as the expression of Himself. It was this feature of His teaching that was most impressive from the first. Mark describes it as the 'authority' with which He spoke, Mk. i, 21-28: 'And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes' (verse 22); and, 'What is this? a new teaching: with authority he commandeth the unclean spirits themselves, and they obey him'.

Ordinary Jewish teachers, like the scribes and rabbis, were accustomed to base what they had to say on the Law and the explanations of its meaning and the application of it that had been made by previous teachers. So far as Jesus refers to this 'tradition of the elders' it is to contrast it with the 'commandment of God' (Mk. vii, 8, 9). He did not regard Himself or His disciples as bound by the explanations of the Law that others had given. Even the precepts of the Law themselves He treated with great freedom. This is

specially striking in Matthew's account of His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Ye have heard that it was said to them of old . . . but I say unto you' is the formula that introduces saying after saying that seems to supersede a precept of the Law (e.g. Mt. v, 21, 27, 33, 38, 43) and actually does go so much deeper into the moral questions involved that it leaves the formal precept of the Law far behind.[1]

Matthew may be partly responsible for this emphasis on the difference between the moral teaching of Jesus and the precepts of the Law, but he probably found the expression in the collection of sayings he used, for Luke has one such instance, 'But I say unto you which hear', which seems to imply a quotation from the Law preceding it (Lk. vi, 27). It is impossible not to feel that the moral ideals of Jesus are on a higher plane than the Law; and that is what men felt at the time. Here was a teacher who did not appeal

[1] It is in this sense that He could be said to bring the Law to fulfilment, by shewing that it was not enough to take it literally and keep it only in the letter (Mt. v, 17, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil').

to other people's opinions or any authority outside Himself. He did not argue about goodness and badness or give reasons for His teaching. His teaching seemed to come straight from Himself, and to go straight to the point, as if He had a vivid picture of the nature of things before Him and knew by a kind of instinct the truth about them, what was wrong and what was right. He saw it by intuition and declared it as He saw it, just on His own word—'Verily, I say unto you' (strengthened in the Fourth Gospel to 'verily, verily'). And He acted as He spoke. Words and acts came from Him spontaneously, with complete freedom from convention and with no kind of compromise. And He spoke in a way that people could understand, drawing His similes and illustrations from Nature and all the ordinary occupations and activities of men; from flowers and trees and farming and fishing and building and letting and hiring and masters and servants and all the affairs of daily life. He seemed to see in Nature and the ordinary experience of human life a kind of reflexion of God and His purposes. So He made old ideas fresh, and

brought new ones home to the minds or hearts of the people who heard Him by the aptness of His illustrations.

In the parables we have some of His simplest and some of His deepest teaching. It was a form of teaching which had been in use from time immemorial. The simplest story about things familiar in daily life, with a lesson contained in it, is a parable. The lesson may be merely prudential, or as to what pays best in the world. The parable about the Unjust Steward (Lk. xvi, 1-13) is a story of a man who 'did a good stroke of business' for himself; he shewed his worldly wisdom and acted cleverly in his own interests. But he cheated his employer. The morality of the transaction is not considered—only its cleverness with regard to the end in view. And the suggestion is that some of the cleverness and foresight which a man in danger of losing his place in the world of business employs might well be used in the much more lasting business in which the sons of light are engaged. It is a kind of *argumentum ad hominem* and an instance of a kind of parable in which one main idea is illus-

trated which can be transferred to other subjects, while the details of the story are ignored for the purpose of the teacher.

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus the beggar who lay at his gate (Lk. xvi, 19-31) also has probably one purpose only, and that is not to press on rich people the duty of giving to poor people, nor to teach any doctrine of a future life in which the inequalities of this life will be redressed, but to insist that it is conduct in this life that determines for everyone his condition hereafter. The imagery is all taken from current ideas and beliefs—these are just used as a framework, and the parable is not intended to teach anything about the nature of the future life but to illustrate the one idea that nothing hereafter can alter character formed in this life.

The word 'parable' comes from a Greek word that means a placing of one thing side by side with another and so a comparison, and it is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament as the equivalent of a common Hebrew word that in our translation is usually rendered 'proverb'. The point is always that there is some kind of

likeness implied, and a kind of image or picture of something else that is real or true is given by the 'parable', which serves to impress the idea on the mind and memory. Simple simile comes first and we can have a story that keeps to one simile throughout (So and so is like so and so . . . etc.); then metaphor, when one thing is called something else when what is meant is that in some of its characteristics it is like it; and then, when a whole story is made up of metaphors, every word used standing for something else, we have 'allegory', as in the Vine and its Branches (Jn. xv, 1-8) and the Good Shepherd, and the Sheep and the Wolf (Jn. x, 1-21). These allegories are found peculiarly in the Fourth Gospel, but the other Gospels contain some stories that do not only draw out one idea with one simile running through them but also contain metaphor and become more like allegories. The two kinds are mixed and the details are intended to suggest things of different kinds.

Some scholars would limit the meaning of 'parable' to a simple story in which one idea only is intended to be taught. They think that this

was the only kind of parable actually used by Jesus Himself and that afterwards, as the stories were repeated, a new turn was given to them and additions introduced to make them apply to conditions later than the time of Jesus and suggest ideas which were not in His mind. Considering that all the sayings of Jesus were spoken in Aramaic and afterwards translated into Greek and circulated by word of mouth, it would be contrary to all experience that they should all be preserved exactly as they were spoken.

In the interval before they were written down, and even afterwards, before our Gospels were compiled, some variations of the kind suggested may easily and naturally have occurred. And, again, some new stories based on vague memory of what Jesus actually had said may have been made and pointed up to fit the circumstances of a later time. But there is no reason to suppose that Jesus confined Himself to the simplest kind of parable only and did not allow Himself as much freedom in this form of teaching as others had done. And if we admit this, the fact that a vein of allegory enters into some of the parables

will not by itself be a good reason for doubting that they were spoken by Jesus.

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WHAT JESUS THOUGHT ABOUT GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT JESUS THOUGHT ABOUT GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

EVERY religion has its own conception of GOD, and the Christian religion has as its own the doctrine of the Trinity. But this doctrine was not taught by Jesus in the way that a doctrine of GOD was taught by the founders of other great religions. Like other Christian doctrines it depends largely on beliefs about Jesus Himself which were the outcome of the experience of His followers after His death. It depends on their conviction that the relations they had with Jesus, risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven as they believed, were relations with GOD Himself, and that the Spirit of Jesus was the Spirit of GOD. It is this conviction that gives to the Christian conception of GOD a character all its own. But there was no clear conviction of this kind in anyone's mind in His lifetime; nor, indeed, can

we penetrate into the mind of Jesus deeply enough to find exactly what He thought of Himself.

But there is much to shew what He thought about God and about the 'Kingdom of God' of which He was always talking. He lived continuously and consistently as it were 'in the presence of God.' 'Let us draw near to God, and He will draw near to us' we say; and we have our special times and ways for quickening in us the consciousness of God. But Jesus seems always to have been conscious of His nearness. He thought of God as His Father, and His attitude to Him was that of a son admitted to a large measure of his father's confidence, and entrusted by him with a special mission to the rest of his fellow-men. But He too, as we have seen, felt the need of, and took pains to secure, times of quiet retirement from the ordinary routine of His life when He might get closer fellowship and communion with His God, and learn more of His will. His constant habit of prayer, and of waiting for the will of God to be manifested more clearly to Him, is shewn in the story of His life. No less clear

is His conviction that He knew God as no one else had known Him (see especially Lk. x, 22, and Mt. xi, 27). It was God's will that His Kingdom should be established, His reign, His rule, His sovereignty. He had a plan and a purpose for the world and the men in it that was not effective yet. His purpose was being thwarted, but it was to be supreme in the world. Jesus was certain of this. The thought of this Kingdom of God was central in all His teaching. But what kind of God and what kind of kingdom was it?

In His thought about God and the Kingdom of God Jesus drew largely from the great religious thinkers of His own race. His God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Hebrew prophet and psalmist, the God too, it seems, of later Jewish apocalyptists. He based His teaching on the Old Testament belief in a personal God who was before all things and was the creator and preserver of the world and all that is. Perhaps there was not one thought about God in all His teaching that one of the prophets before Him had not had and declared. But all had passed through His own mind and been

sifted, as it were, in the sieve of His own experience. It was not that He consciously, so far as we can tell, selected this thought and discarded that. The later prophets themselves had sometimes done so with regard to the teaching of earlier prophets. Progress from lower to higher ideas of God can be traced in the collection of books which the Jews held all alike as sacred; and in some respects perhaps Jesus still had in the background of His mind some of the earlier ideas that belonged to the religious childhood of His people or the earlier stages of God's revelation to them of Himself. But Jesus had had His own revelations in His own experience, and, however much the religious ideas of the Hebrew prophets who preceded Him contributed to His own apprehension of truth about God, yet He only appeals to any such 'authority' to illustrate His own teaching. He is usually content to let His own certainties speak for themselves and to say what He knew to be true; and it is the emphasis He puts on some ideas rather than on others that gives its special character to the picture of God that His sayings and acts set before us.

For example, He does not discard the ideas that the God of Israel was the true God, that the Jews had been peculiarly His people, and that by and through them chiefly His purposes for mankind were to be realized. Even at the end His disciples could ask, 'Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' (Acts i, 6) and He only put the question by, leaving the idea uncorrected. He would not discourage in anyone the belief that he himself as an individual person and his fortunes were God's concern. But He made no restrictions. He spoke to all alike of God as God of the whole world, excluding no one from His fatherly care, willing the best for all.

Some of His most striking sayings about God's care for individual men were indeed addressed to the band of disciples on whom He depended to spread His teaching in face of persecution ('the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore'—Lk. xii, 7; Mt. x, 30, 31).

But one of the most arresting features of His teaching was the emphasis He laid on the value

of the individual as an end in himself in the eyes of God, and there is never any suggestion that He had a particular race or class of men in view. It was Everyman whom God had made to be His son.

Perhaps the most distinctive Christian conviction about God is stated in the words 'God is Love'. But we do not find this conviction stated in the lifetime of Jesus—not indeed until Christians had come on the one hand to see in the death of Jesus on the Cross the means of their redemption or salvation, and on the other hand to regard Him as so closely associated with God that it was at once true that God the Father gave His beloved Son to die for men and that the Son loved them and gave Himself for them. That was proof such as had never been before—a new revelation that Love was the chief characteristic of God.

Love, we know, can be exacting. If it desires the best possible for the object of its love, it also demands a high standard of character and the right use of opportunities. And in the teaching of Jesus there is austerity and sternness. His

teaching gives no countenance to any idea of an easy-going God, tolerant of evil, or in any kind of way neutral when moral issues are at stake. The image of the Judge is frequently used, and that of the lord and his servants (that is, in the economic conditions of those days, the master and his slaves); and if those who range themselves on the side of Jesus and live according to His ideals are to be rewarded, punishment—sometimes pictured in awe-inspiring forms—is declared to be the fate of the rest. (See especially the parables of the Pounds (Minae), Lk. xix, 11-27, or the Talents, Mt. xxv, 14-30.)

It is even said that the servant who did not do his master's will, even though he did not know what it was, shall suffer for it: he shall be beaten, though only with few stripes (Lk. xii, 48).

But special condemnation falls on two classes: (1) those who were given high places in the world and misused their power and opportunities (see Lk. xii, 42-46 and Mt. xxiv, 45-51); and (2) those who made profession of faith in Jesus ('who profess and call themselves Christians' in

the words of our prayer) and did things in His name, and yet were indifferent to the call at their own doors of their fellow-men in suffering and want (see Mt. xxv, 31-46).

A man's faith in God, as Jesus thought of Him, was not mere trust in His love and providence and gratitude for His gifts. It must be shewn by the way he uses the advantages given him and in acts of unselfishness and love towards his brothers; for God is Father of all men and therefore all men are members of one family.

There is another way in which we may see what Jesus thought about God. What we pray for to God shews something of our own character, but it also shews a good deal of what we think about God. Very few of the prayers of Jesus are known to us. There is the prayer in Gethsemane (Mk. xiv, 36, and parallels); and the prayer from the Cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Lk. xxiii, 34). Praise of God and thanksgiving were the chief parts of the prayer of Jews, like the 'Father glorify thy name' in Jn. xii, 28, and the great

thanksgiving in Lk. x, 21 and Mt. xi, 25.[1] In the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples we see some of the leading ideas of His theology. We know it as 'the Lord's prayer', and it is natural to suppose that it represents, so far as it goes, the subjects of His own prayers. 'Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation' (Lk. xi, 2-4).

This is probably the original form of the prayer. The longer version of it in Mt. vi, 9-13 simply expands some of the clauses. For 'Father' in the address it gives 'Our Father who art in heaven'. After the clause 'thy kingdom come, it adds 'Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth'. And it enlarges the final clause by the words 'but deliver us from the evil one'.

Everyone who uses the prayer should consider its meaning clause by clause, and what kind of God He is of whom such things can be asked.

[1] The great intercessory prayer in Jn. xvii, 1-26 is probably the author's own composition summing up what he believed to be most characteristic in the prayer of Jesus.

At present we want to consider only what the prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of God means.

The clause 'Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth' was probably intended as a kind of paraphrase of the two previous clauses. The establishment of the sovereignty of God on earth would mean that throughout its length and breadth His will would be supreme. Everyone would know and do His will. Whatever Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God coming on earth it certainly included the idea of an order of human life and affairs very different from the present order. Of His sayings and parables about it some simply proclaim it as a thing of value beyond all measures of value; some partly describe what it is; and some suggest the way in which it may come into being.

In the first class are the similes in Mt. xiii, 44-46 (the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price). It is something of worth so great that a man would give all that he has to have it for his own.

Considering how prominent a place the coming

of the Kingdom had in the teaching of Jesus, it may seem strange that there is so little actual description of what it would be. It is as though the idea of God's reigning on earth was enough. Then at least all would be well with the world.

What Jesus seems to have been most concerned with was to describe the kind of people who would be fit members of an order of life in which God's will was actually operating effectively, and in the Sermon on the Mount we have a number of illustrations of the principles and ideals and character which qualify for admission to the Kingdom. There are also other sayings about it. For example, Jesus tells the sons of Zebedee (Mk. x, 35-45 || Mt. xx, 20-28)[1] that high place in the Kingdom will be only for those who are able to suffer much and devote themselves to the service of others. Again, He tells the scribe (Mk. xii, 28-34) that whole-hearted love of God and of your neighbour is enough to bring a man very near to the Kingdom of God.

[1] Note how Matthew relieves the two apostles of the charge of self-seeking and presumption by making their mother ask for them.

This is a saying which ought to be carefully considered. The Kingdom is usually referred to as if it were an event to be expected in the future, whether sooner or later—something that would happen in the course of the history of the world, as an earthquake happens, or a great war, so that everyone knows about it. It could be represented by the picture of 'the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven' so that everyone would see (Mk. xiii, 26, 27; Lk. xxi, 27, 28; Mt. xxiv, 30, 31). There was a time coming which would be a day of judgement and a day of reward (see the parables, Mt. xxiv, 45-xxv, 46).

But again there is this saying to the Scribe which suggests a different idea. It is as if by the Kingdom of God was meant nothing outward and visible or 'happening', nor even a new arrangement of things here at all, but instead of this something inward in men's own hearts and minds. It might lead to great changes in the organization of human society. But the Kingdom was not like any earthly kingdom, however righteous and wise and perfectly managed it might be. It was a spiritual order that had noth-

ing to do with place and time, a realm of ideas and qualities like holiness and righteousness and love. And a man might at least touch as it were the threshold of that realm here and now, if his own disposition and state of mind and character were in harmony with those qualities—if he was already thinking and feeling and meaning in accordance with them.

So, too, there is the saying, that only Luke records, which is generally translated 'the kingdom of God is within you' (Lk. xvii, 21). If this translation is right,[1] the saying confirms the idea of the Kingdom just described. It is a settled habit or state of a man's own mind, an inward experience, when his thoughts and desires and affections are pure and good.

On another occasion, with reference to the Jewish rules about meats that might or might not be eaten, Jesus had said (Mk. vii, 14-23) that nothing of that kind could defile a man. It was the

[1] The meaning may be 'is in your midst'. This suits the context best. Jesus is discouraging calculations as to when the Kingdom would come, and says it will be no question of here or there. It will be on them, in their midst, outside all calculations, before they know.

state of his heart (or his mind) that made him what he was, and if he was defiled it was because of what was within his heart—'evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness'. 'All these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man.' No man with these things in his heart could be near the Kingdom.

So, almost as if with this saying in his mind, St Paul says that 'the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in holy spirit' (Rom. xiv, 17) and he writes (Col. iii, 12-16) of 'a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering', and of forgiveness and love, as the characteristics of 'God's elect'. In them the peace of Christ rules in their hearts and the word of Christ dwells in them richly in all wisdom.

Anyone whose state of mind and heart could be described in this way would have the Kingdom of God 'within' him. He would be 'not far from the kingdom of God', he would indeed be living already in the realm of 'heaven', while still on the

plane of earth. So the Kingdom would not be merely a far-off event in the future, but a present fact of experience, and the good news Jesus preached would be that the Kingdom might be to everyone a present ideal and power.

Again, as to the way in which the Kingdom of God may come into being, there are references to it that suggest a dramatic intervention by God in the affairs of the world. One of them is the saying in Mk. ix, 1 (‖s Lk. lx, 27; Mt. xvi, 28), 'Verily I say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power', with which the saying in Mt. x, 23, 'Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come', may be compared. Jesus seems at an earlier stage of His ministry to have expected some great act of God by which the new *régime* would be established; and even at the end His words to the high priest (Mk. xiv, 62; Mt. xxvi, 64) imply the same expectation. We must not ignore the fact that this 'catastrophic' conception of human history and of God's interventions in the ordinary course of

affairs is implied in many of the sayings of Jesus (see further the Appendix to this chapter, pp. 56-59).

Yet there is also much in His teaching that is in line with the knowledge we now have that God's general way of working is gradual and evolutionary rather than sudden and revolutionary.

There are the parables of the Seed that grows in ways invisible to men (Mk. iv, 26-29), of the Mustard Seed that has tiny beginnings and becomes a great tree (Mk. iv, 30-32), and of the Leaven (Mt. xiii, 33); and these all imply a gradual diffusion as it were of a new idea or a new spirit in the world, permeating the minds and hearts of men and affecting all their relationships with one another. So human society would become more and more like what God intends it to be, till it fulfilled the idea of the Kingdom of God on earth, and so in this way the Kingdom would be established.

It was an age when the problem of evil and pain loomed large in men's eyes, making it hard to believe that the power and the spirit at the

heart of things is really love. But Jesus boldly held to His belief in God as Father and men as brothers. These two ideas went together in His thought. The Kingdom was the fulfilment or realization of them both together, and if men would bear themselves as sons of God and act to one another as brothers, they would be in enjoyment of the power of the Kingdom here and now.

APPENDIX

The Place of Jesus in the Kingdom

Jesus believed that He had been sent by God not only to announce the speedy coming of the Kingdom and to tell men what it meant, but also to occupy a central place in it. Our Gospels were not written till His followers had become convinced that He was the Messiah foreseen by the prophets of Israel, and this conviction seems to have affected some of the accounts of incidents in the narrative. We have seen that Jesus Himself, at all events in the latter part of His career, accepted the idea that He was, or

was to be, Messiah. But He seems to have spoken of Himself not as Messiah, but as the Son of Man. These two terms represent two different sets of ideas.

The Messiah that was most widely expected by Jews was to be a great Jewish prince or warrior king, who would free them, by force of arms and wars and victories, from all foreign domination and establish a world-wide rule, with the Jewish religion supreme and their God as the God of all the world. With this political and warlike idea of the Messiah Jesus would have nothing to do. (See pp. 103 ff.)

But there was also widely current at the time another idea in expressing which another title, 'the Son of Man', was used. This phrase in Aramaic might mean only Man (as it does, for example, in Psalm viii, in Ezekiel and other passages in the Old Testament, and probably in Mk. ii, 10). In Daniel vii, with the same meaning, the phrase 'like unto a son of man' describes the heaven-sent but still human king who was to preside over the kingdom that was to redress the misfortunes of the people of Israel and bring

them prosperity unknown before. This human and earthly kingdom, presided over by faithful Jews, is contrasted as the rule of the Saints of the Most High with the brute kingdoms of the world, and the establishment of it is thought of as the act of GOD. But in later Jewish writings, which were regarded as prophetic of the future, especially the Book of Enoch,[1] 'the Son of Man' becomes the title of a supernatural being, the special representative of GOD, destined at the moment of GOD's choice to be miraculously sent from above 'on the clouds of heaven', to establish GOD's Kingdom on earth, by a sudden catastrophic intervention of overwhelming power. Great disasters or 'woes' would precede His coming. Much of the imagery by which the end is depicted in our Gospels (e.g. Mk. xiii) is apparently derived from these later Jewish writings.

Moreover, Jesus is described as using not only this imagery but also the title 'Son of Man' of Himself; and so He would be considered by those who heard Him and knew these writings to be supporting the ideas expressed in them.

[1] The book which is referred to in the Epistle of Jude, verse 14.

Yet it is obvious that He did not fulfil the descriptions of the Book of Enoch, and when He used the title of Himself He must have had some other idea in His mind. The title is used chiefly after Peter had blurted out his own belief that Jesus was the Messiah (Mk. viii, 27-30; ‖s Lk. ix, 18-21 and Mt. xvi, 13-16). Jesus at once begins to impress on the disciples the idea, for which they were quite unprepared, that, if He was the Messiah, it was a Messiah unlike what they expected—namely, a suffering Messiah; and He uses the third person and the ambiguous title 'the Son of Man' (Mk. viii, 31).[1]

It has been suggested that Jesus intentionally used a title which would not be understood as referring to Himself in His present state and that none the less He regarded Himself as destined,

[1] Some who heard Him might suppose that He was speaking of someone else who was to come after Him. At a later time, when it had become clear that He meant Himself, the writer of a Gospel could substitute the first personal pronoun for the impersonal title, as Matthew does in this passage, Mt. xvi, 21 (cf. Mk. viii, 31); and elsewhere he uses the title instead of the personal pronoun which is in the passage he is copying (cf. Mt. xvi, 13 and Mk. viii, 27), and so the evidence as to the use Jesus Himself made of the title is confused in our Gospels.

after the suffering and death which He anticipated, to return to earth and fulfil the *rôle* of the Son of Man of the Book of Enoch. He was the Messiah-to-be, and in the future He would come again to carry out the Judgement which would precede the establishment of the new era. The belief that He would thus come again has been at all events the belief of the vast majority of Christians ever since. It is the only belief on the subject of the Kingdom that has a place in both the Nicene and the Apostles' Creed.

There had been nothing like this belief before. The idea of a Messiah, or a Son of Man, who lived as other men in the world in lowliness and poverty, was rejected and put to death as an evil-doer, and yet would come again in 'glory', was entirely new. It shews the kind of 'originality' Jesus had, and it warns us not to take any narrow view of what He meant by the Kingdom of God. We may not be able to express it fully, but all the different ideas of the Kingdom which we have noted would have to be represented in a complete picture of the truth about it, as Jesus conceived it.

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WHAT JESUS THOUGHT ABOUT THE WORLD AND MAN'S PLACE IN IT

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT JESUS THOUGHT ABOUT THE WORLD AND MAN'S PLACE IN IT

To Jesus this is God's world and all the things in it and all the men and women and children are His concern. 'He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust' (Mt. v. 45).

His knowledge and love of Nature is shewn by His constant references to sky and cloud and wind, mountain and lake, and flowers and fruits and trees and birds and fish. He draws from the life of Nature many of His most vivid illustrations of what is true of God and man's life. God's care extends through it all. He clothes the grass of the field, and feeds the birds of the heaven, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. The lily of the field, the common wild flower, is more beautiful and attractive than the splendid raiment of kings (Mt. vi, 26-30).

He spent most of His time in the open country, and again it is from the ordinary life of a farm, cleaning the land, ploughing and raking and weeding, and seedtime and harvest, that more of His pictures are drawn. There are seasons for this and seasons for that. There are mysteries in the life of animals and plants, in growth and maturity and decay, that are symbols of what is true in man.

Yet His interest in the ordinary life of men is shewn no less clearly by His illustrations from trades and commerce, buying and selling and banking. Jesus was in close touch with this ordinary life of man, no hermit or recluse. Though in the latter part of His life He stood detached from its natural occupations, it is evident that He looked on them with interest and understanding and was in sympathy with the men and women engaged in them, whatever He thought about the coming of the Kingdom and the changes it would bring with it.

Obviously, too, Jesus enjoyed life. In spite of the sternness of His attitude to certain types of people and wrong-doing, and His unfailing

sympathy with sufferers of every kind, there is a joyousness in His outlook on the world that is in striking contrast with the pessimistic temper of some of His followers. He never represents pain as a good thing. It is something evil, a positive active evil that must be resisted and overcome and annihilated by the stronger force of good. He would bear hardship and suffering without flinching Himself when it came, or when He believed that it was God's will that He should die by a cruel and ignominious death (see the picture of Him in Gethsemane and throughout His trial). But there was no passiveness in His bearing towards the cruelties and the sufferings of others around Him. Nor is 'the Man of Sorrows' at all an adequate description of Him. 'Pleasure', indeed, is a word that is not in His vocabulary; but He had much to say about happiness and the way to it. The Beatitudes are a summary of part of His teaching about the way to be happy. If they seem to describe passive states rather than active ways of living, yet there is plenty of teaching about the activities of life.

It is true that Jesus more often bids men *be*

this or that than *do* this or that: but none the less He looks to their doings to shew what they are. 'By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' and, again, 'Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven' (Mt. vii, 16, 21; Lk. vi, 43-46). The parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Mt. xiii, 45, 46) is His challenge to adventure. There is no 'safety first' in His language, but just as in the story of Peter in the boat in a storm He bids him come boldly to Him over the waves (Mt. xiv, 28, 29), or in the story of the fishermen He bids them launch out into the deep (Lk. v, 4), so He would have men always courageous and venturesome and resourceful, ready to take risks and put their faith into action.

A famous phrase of Burke's speaks of two things—'the glory of God' and 'the relief of man's estate'. Jesus seems hardly to distinguish between the two. In several of the parables He insists on the duty of service, likening life to a trust committed to each of us by God. Differ-

ent capacities are given us, and different opportunities of service to correspond with our capacities. The capacities themselves are the trust, and they are not the same nor equal for all men. But to all alike there is one and the same call, one and the same duty is laid on them all—to cultivate their capacities and make the best use of them for the good of all. And they must be on the look-out for opportunities and ready to take responsibilities.

This seems to be the conviction that governs what He says about riches and high station in the world, and about the need of being ready to meet an emergency whenever it comes.

These ideas are vividly expressed in the parables of the Pounds (Lk. xiv, 11-28), the Talents (Mt. xxiv, 14-30), the Ten Virgins (Mt. xxv, 1-13), the Stewards (Lk. xii, 41-47), the Judgement (Mt. xxv, 34-46).

This is the kind of adventure and ambition that Jesus encourages. Many of His sayings and parables on the subject are only narrated by Matthew, but Mark tells how Jesus called the disciples to Him and said (Mk. x, 42-45) 'who-

soever would become great among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever would be first among you, shall be bond-servant of all. For indeed the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (cf. Mt. xx, 25-28 and Lk. xxii, 25, 26; also Mk. ix, 35 and Mt. xxiii, 11). And all the evangelists record, with slight variations, the comprehensive saying to the effect that the man who is set on saving himself shall lose himself, but he who is willing to disregard himself will find his true life (see the saying in Mark viii, 35, with the parallels Lk. ix, 24, Mt. xvi, 25; another version of it in Mt. x, 39 and Lk. xvii, 33). The self-centred life is not worthy to be called life. Selfishness is the death of the soul. The version of the saying that is given in the Fourth Gospel (Jn. xii, 25), 'He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal' is a still more emphatic statement of the thought that is also expressed in the words 'For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life (*or* his own self)?' (Mk. viii, 36; Lk. ix, 25; Mt. xvi, 26).

The saying that the world is 'a vale of soul-making' is quite in keeping with the ideas of Jesus. Soul-making is the business of life. There is nothing so important as a man's personality or character. That is what survives when the body dies. The world that confronts man is one of God's ordering with a view to man's training and perfecting: 'Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt. v, 48). For each man it is only the first stage in an experience which will not be completed here but in another world, above and beyond, hereafter. This conviction underlies the whole life and teaching of Jesus. Life is a trust committed to everyone born into the world. Hereafter he will have to give an account of the trust. It is what he is making of it, stage by stage of his life, that makes him what he is; and what he really is will determine his state in his future life, whether the Son of Man shall be ashamed of Him. (Mk. viii, 38 and ||s) or shall say to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant' (Mt. xxv, 23).

Of this future life, and of the 'other world' in which it is to be lived, the recorded sayings of

Jesus give hardly any description. He used the imagery that was current in His day and familiar to His hearers. Everyone after death would have to undergo a judgement and there would be rewards and punishments. The judgement would be committed to the 'Son of Man'. If Jesus believed that He was this Son of Man, then judgement would be in the hands of one who knew from His own experience, from within, all the difficulties of human life, and would make allowances for them. But the standard would be the high standard which He set up in His teaching and lived out in His life—His ideas and ideals. And whatever He thought or taught about the future, it is always the present with which He concerns Himself—how a man is using his life here and now. Whether the 'Kingdom' is to come visibly and suddenly, or after long delay, or only to be realized in its fulness by anyone after this life; yet its principles ought to guide and shape life now. It is the immediate present that matters. This note of immediacy remains as the permanent truth of the call 'the Kingdom of God is at hand'. In the sayings and

parables of the three earlier Gospels the judgement is described in imagery drawn from the courts of earthly potentates administering praise and blame, and portrayed as a future event on the issues of which a man's eternal life will depend. But the Fourth Gospel goes deeper down than these pictures. It makes the judgement an inward thing, the decision of a man's own conscience when the appeal that the life and character of Jesus make is presented to him. There is no need of any external authority. A man is his own witness and judge. He accepts or rejects the standards and ideals of Jesus, or the values that He sets on different ways of living; and so he is self-judged. Living according to one scale of values is really missing the meaning of life, or death. See the two ways of putting this in Jn. v, 17-30 and Jn. viii, 12-20, xii, 44-50.

There is no doubt that the picture of Jesus given by the writers of the first three Gospels is in agreement with the saying that the author of the Fourth Gospel attributes to Him in the first of these passages, 'He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal

life, and cometh not unto judgement, but hath passed out of death into life' (Jn. v, 24), and again with another saying, 'I came that they may have life, and have it in abundance' (Jn. x, 10), that is, here and now.

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THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

CHAPTER SIX

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

LUKE vi, 12-20: 'And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray: and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples: and he chose from them twelve . . . and he came down with them, and stood on a level place, and a great multitude of his disciples and a great number of the people from all Judæa and Jerusalem, and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon . . . and he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said. . . .'

Mt. iv, 25-v, 1: 'And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judæa and from beyond Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying. . . .'

So Luke and Matthew introduce their accounts, and the picture of the Teacher on a plateau of the mountain side with the crowd of listeners around him is one to arrest attention. There is nothing like this Sermon in Mark, and no doubt it was from Q that Luke and Matthew got it. Luke's version of the Sermon is much shorter than Matthew's, only some thirty verses (Lk. vi, 20-49) compared with over a hundred in Matthew (Mt. v-vii). Nearly all that Luke records is included in Matthew's account, though with some differences; and the Sermon in Matthew may be said to be the Lucan Sermon with three additional passages incorporated in it at three successive points, and a few omissions and rearrangements. The greater part of the matter of these insertions of Matthew, or at least the sayings which are what we should call the 'texts' of them, are found in some other connexion in Luke (a few of them also in Mark). Matthew himself, too, gives some of them in the course of his general narrative, regardless of the fact that he has already utilized them in the Sermon.

If, then, both Luke and Matthew derive their

knowledge of the Sermon from Q, it seems probable that it was the shorter form that was contained in Q, based on memory of one actually spoken by Jesus. Not that Jesus may not ever have spoken at such great length, but for two main reasons. The first is that if Luke had had such a long connected discourse before him, it is not likely that he would have broken it up into fragments and scattered them in different places in his Gospel, as on this assumption he must have done. And the second is that it is characteristic of Matthew beyond all the other evangelists to arrange his materials according to their subjects. He takes a particular saying or parable of Jesus, spoken on some particular occasion (as Mark or Luke record it), and round it as a nucleus in groups of three, five, seven, or nine. So it is probable that in this case he took the actual Sermon in Q as his basis and collected and arranged his extra matter so as to give an exposition, at the very outset of the ministry of Jesus, of the main tenor of his teaching. And he did this in such a way as to bring out vividly its distinctive characteristics in comparison with the ethical

teaching of the Law of Moses and the ideals of righteousness represented by the scribes and Pharisees—this is what the Law says, this is what I say.

Indeed Matthew seems here, as elsewhere in his Gospel, to be influenced by the feeling that there ought to be a new 'Christian' Law in place of the old Law of Moses, a new code of conduct for Christians; and there are traces of the desire to make Jesus the authority for the kind of ecclesiastical legislation which the Church inevitably as it seems, soon began to frame. Yet, apart from these tendencies, the contrasts he emphasizes between the letter of the old Law and the ideals of Jesus are true, and were obvious, as we have seen, to the scribes and Pharisees as well as to the multitudes at the time. The teaching was new to them.

St Augustine, the great bishop of Hippo in Africa early in the fifth century, was the first, so far as we know, to write a commentary on this section of the Gospel as a whole by itself, and he says of it that 'anyone who gave it pious and sober consideration would find in it the principles of

the highest ethics and a perfect standard of Christian life'. It is from this point of view that it ought to be studied. It is Augustine, too, who seems to have been the first to describe it as 'the Sermon on the Mount', though that title was not in general use till the time of the Reformation and then only in the English translations of the Bible (first in the Great Bible of 1540, 'the most excellent and lovynge sermon of Chryst in the Mount: which sermon is the very keye that openeth the understandynge into the lawe'). It is not really a 'sermon', but rather a description of the character that qualifies for membership of 'the Kingdom of God', setting up as it does moral and spiritual standards and ideals as tests of fitness for the Kingdom.

The first words shew that this is the intention: 'blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. 'Theirs is', not 'shall be' but 'is'. The Kingdom of heaven belongs to persons of the type of character described in various ways in the discourse that follows. The Kingdom is a society of persons of a particular kind, and the whole discourse has in view the conception of

personality as built up by social relationships and manifested in them. It has been called 'the manifesto of the new spiritual society', and it treats the individual always as one who knows that his existence is bound up with other existences, like himself, in relations with whom his life has to be lived. If he is a person, so too they are persons, and the recognition of the 'personality' of others does not make his own 'personality' less, but rather enables him to realize it in its full and proper character. So it is the society that is in view throughout, and it is the right relations of the individual to other individuals in the society that are described. The Christian's practical life in the world is to be guided by the principles laid down. They are the expression of the character of the true disciple. He will act thus and thus, because he is such or such a person.

In all but the first of the 'blessings' ('beatitudes') with which the Sermon begins it is the future tense, 'shall be', that is used: 'They shall be comforted', 'they shall be filled', and so on. The Kingdom referred to is something not yet attained, but to be enjoyed hereafter. No doubt

this was the way in which Jesus spoke, looking forward to the Kingdom to come. But no less clearly it was a present state which He described as qualifying men for membership of the future Kingdom with its blessings. And He declared people of that kind to be divinely happy in anticipation. The consciousness of what is to be theirs in the future is to sustain them in their present state. There is to be a 'great reward' for them 'in heaven'; but already they are to be counted and to count themselves as in a state of bliss. All is well with them.[1]

It is character that makes a man what he is. His acts will usually shew what his character is; but it is what he is aiming at, what he desires, what he has really set his heart on, that counts as his character. This may often be hidden away from other people: he may even be hardly conscious of it himself. But when he is, as it were, 'taken unawares', surprised by some crisis, then he will shew, for good or for bad, his real self.

[1] The Hebrew word used in the O.T.—e.g. Psalm i, 1, ii, 12—is regularly rendered in the LXX by the word μακάριος, 'blessed', which is used of the gods or of men believed to have passed from life in the world to a state of divine well-being.

This, no doubt, is why Jesus in His teaching refused to limit Himself to conduct only. The Mosaic Law, like nearly all human systems of Law, dealt only with what men ought to do. Jesus shews what they ought to be. Nothing that He said gives us more insight into His mind in this respect than His saying about the law against murder (Mt. v, 21, 22). Everyone who is angry with his brother stands condemned by this law. We must look to the source of the evil act, and we find it in the feeling of passionate anger which might lead to the act of killing. It is what is 'in his heart' that determines what a man is, even if he never carries it out in deed. Jesus takes some instances, as examples, to shew that thought and imagination and desire must be under control, as well as acts. And as if to give still sharper point to the teaching, Matthew brings into the Sermon here part of a saying which he found in Mark (ix, 43-48) and gives again further on in his Gospel (Mt. xviii, 8, 9) in the context in which it was in Mark. Man has capacities and powers which he can use for good or for evil, and instruments like eyes and hands with which

to do what he wants to do. But it would be better to be blind and not see at all, better to be maimed and without some of the natural powers of a man, than to be led into evil thoughts and desires by eye or hand. Complete renunciation is not the ideal, not a counsel of perfection, but it may be the only way of saving a man's soul from destruction (Mt. v, 29, 30).

In the teaching of Jesus it is the direction of thought and desire that is all important. In the parable of the Tax-Collector and the Pharisee a contrast is drawn between the man who knows that he is not what he ought to be and yet longs to be it, and the man who is satisfied that he is fulfilling all his moral and religious duties and is not aiming at being better than he is (Lk. xviii, 9-14). And in the Sermon on the Mount the sayings 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness' (Mt. v, 6) and 'Be ye (or, ye shall be) perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt. v, 48) make the desire to reach out to the highest possible ideal the qualifications for the Kingdom, rather than the attainment of a respectable level of life and conduct.

It is an attitude to life and a way of living now that He meant to suggest to those who would be His disciples.

Some have thought that, because He believed the end of the world as it is was near at hand and expected the Kingdom to come at once, and did not think of human life and society as going on indefinitely, His teaching was only meant to apply to the short interval of expectation, before the Kingdom came. And others have thought that He had only in view members of His own Society, the Church, and meant His teaching for them only. Whatever the rest of the world did, they were to act as He said. Both these views depend on the idea that He was laying down rules to be obeyed literally.

It is much more probable, however, that He intended to hold out ideals and to state in vivid and striking ways the principles which He thought ought to govern the relations of men one with another, as being all together the family of their Father in heaven.

It is usual to speak of the system of Christian Ethics, and it is possible to derive such a system

from the life and teaching of Jesus. When Matthew grouped His sayings together as he did in the Sermon on the Mount, he had in mind such a system.

But the teaching of Jesus was not formal or systematic, and it is best to take each saying by itself as an indication of an attitude to life and a spirit in which to deal with every question that arises in the ordinary course of life in the world with all its changing circumstances.

Some of His sayings even Luke and Matthew understood in different ways. Take the first 'beatitude'. Jesus said 'Blessed are the poor'. Luke understood Him literally, and he drives the point home by the first of the 'woes' (Lk. vi, 24) which he alone adds to the beatitudes. Jesus may have meant this, for the record of His teaching on other occasions shews that He thought that riches brought with them temptations as well as responsibilities from which the simpler life of poorer folk was free (see Chapter 111). But Matthew took Him to mean 'poor' in the sense the equivalent word often has in the Psalms, namely those who are 'lowly-minded' towards

God, not proud and self-sufficient, but feeling their own littleness and dependence on God. When the Emperor Julian (A.D. 361-363) persecuted Christians and confiscated their property, he said he was giving them a chance of winning the blessing pronounced on the poor. But if Matthew's interpretation is not right, then we have in Luke's version, not advice to the rich to strip themselves of all they have, but a warning to them that their riches will not help to make them fit for the Kingdom. The other evidence in the Gospels shews that it was very far from the mind of Jesus to turn the poor against the rich or make them dissatisfied with their state of life. They are nearer the Kingdom as they are: yet riches shall be theirs in the future. It sounds rather paradoxical.

It is just these paradoxes of which the teaching of Jesus is full that make it so lively and interesting. You cannot be a Christian by rule. But if you let the paradoxes sink in, and make the spirit of them your own, you will usually know what a Christian ought to feel in this or that situation as it arises.

Let us take a few instances.

Are you to 'give to everyone that asks you' (Lk. vi, 30; cf. Mt. v, 42)? No: if you do, you pauperize him, you encourage him to depend on begging instead of working for a living. It would be thoroughly bad for him. But, on the other hand, stint yourself if necessary to help a man, who is 'down on his luck' or out of work, to tide over a difficult time. Give out and out as freely as you will for good objects. If you are an employer, do not try to cut down wages to the barest minimum to increase your own profits; and as a ratepayer, pay your poor rate willingly and do not grudge the unfortunate pauper a few extra comforts beyond mere food and lodging.

Are you to 'lend, expecting nothing back' (Lk. vi, 35; cf. Mt. v, 42)? For centuries Christians thought that lending money on interest (or 'usury') was wrong; though in the Middle Ages various expedients were devised by which an equivalent to interest was secured. Now, our whole system of commerce depends on usury of one kind or another, and if you invest what

money you have you are lending it on interest. But you would act on the moral principle of the saying if you were content with moderate profits in your business or remuneration for your work; and laws to regulate interest on loans in proportion to risk of loss, prohibiting exorbitant interest, are an instance of the way in which under the present conditions of life the spirit of the saying can be made effective.

Are you to 'turn the other cheek' (Lk. vi, 29; Mt. v, 39) and 'resist not evil (or, him that is evil)'? No doubt there have often been Christians who tried to keep these sayings in the letter; but the Church has never made a law on the subject as it did on usury. On the contrary, we have laws to protect persons from assault and laws designed to check evil and evildoers of many kinds. We judge the civilization of a country by the extent to which it secures a high standard of social order, and personal liberty, and respect for individual rights. We believe we learn from Jesus that a kind of sacredness attaches to every man, that he is an end in himself and not intended to be a means to other men's ends or the victim

of the stronger. If Christians are to be humble and passive when their persons are insulted, must not other Christians resent for them the infringement of a principle of their belief and seek to check it? What did Jesus mean? It is important to notice that He hardly ever says what is to be done on any one particular occasion. His words are of much more general application. And this is the main point.

People have often taken the sayings of Jesus too solemnly. They have not allowed Him any sense of humour. There were times, no doubt, when He was stern and austere; but there must often have been a smile and a twinkle in the eye as He brought out His startling sayings. And all this is lost when they are written down. If we are to understand Him, we must realize that He was full of life, and that He was not a philosopher making a system of ethics in his study, but a very human being talking to men and women as the spirit moved Him. And of all that He must have said we have only the best remembered bits, usually just by themselves without the rest of the conversation.

But just because the sayings are so vivacious, we have to look below the surface and try to catch the spirit of them, and then, if we would be guided by Him, see what the principle behind them or in them is. The principle must not be lost sight of just because to follow out the saying in detail nowadays might be inconsistent with some other principle equally important, or even be bad and demoralizing for ourselves or the other person concerned.

So it is with 'turn the other cheek' and 'love your enemies'. Jesus did mean us not to resent affronts or insults, and He did mean us to exercise love even at the sacrifice of our own self-preservation or what others would regard as self-respect. And so, among those who have been fashioned by the spirit of His life and teaching, there has been seen a type of character in which humility and dignity are blended, and a new kind of 'great-mindedness', confronted by which the Greek and Roman ideals of the great man seem petty.

For detailed study of the Sermon the following analysis of it might be used.

Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount

§ i. v, 1-12 (+ 13-16). Description of the ideal of character in the form of Beatitudes (Mt. 7 or 8, Lk. 4) and of its value to the world (the salt of the earth and the light of the world).

§ ii. *vv.* 17-48. This ideal in relation to earlier Hebrew conceptions as seen in the precepts of the Law—*vv.* 17-20 in general shewing that they were only rudimentary and partial expressions of the true ethical principles which rule Christian righteousness, and then *vv.* 21-48 giving five particular illustrations of the deeper sense—viz.

(*a*) *vv.* 21-32, evil thoughts and desires come under the same condemnation as evil acts;

(*b*) *vv.* 33-37, truthfulness required without the safeguard of a formal oath;

(*c*) *vv.* 38-42, willing acceptance of injustice is to supersede the primitive rule of exactly equivalent retribution;

(*d*) *vv.* 43-48, insufficiency of current standards shewn by appeal to God's character and action.

(Of this part of the Sermon only (*c*) and (*d*) are in Luke's version.)

§ iii. vi, 1-24. The new ideal shewn in the new way of treating what were held to be three chief duties of religious life (viz. Almsgiving, *vv.* 2-4; Prayer, *vv.* 5-15; Fasting, *vv.* 16-17), which are to be regarded as secrets between the individual and God. (There are no parallels to these in Luke except the Lord's Prayer which he gives in another connexion.) And three sayings like parables with the

same idea (*vv.* 19-21, the treasure in heaven; *vv.* 22-23, singleness of aim; *v.* 24, singleness of service).

§ iv. vi, 25-vii, 6. Three warnings: (*a*) against anxiety, vi, 25-34; (*b*) against censoriousness, vii, 1-5; (*c*) against profanity, vii, 6.

§ v. vii, 7-23. Three injunctions: (*a*) on petition, *vv.* 7-12; (*b*) on the need of decision, *vv.* 13, 14; (*c*) on life as the test of character, *vv.* 15-23.

§ vi. vii, 24-27. A parable to shew the permanence of the ideal described.

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THE NARRATIVES OF MIRACLES

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE NARRATIVES OF MIRACLES

THROUGHOUT the whole Gospel story Jesus is depicted as one through whom a divine power was working. In Peter's speech to the people at Jerusalem in Acts ii, 22 He is described as 'a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which *God did through him* in the midst of you'; and again in Acts x, 38 there is almost the same description—'Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him with holy spirit and with power: who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for *God was with him*'. The Gospel picture shews Him as one who was regarded as having, as His own, power over men's minds and bodies that seemed to be miraculous; and the narratives of these miracles are a large part not only of the Gospels but of the witness they bear to

the character of Jesus. Without these narratives we should not only have much less picturesque and arresting incident in the story of His life, but we should have much less evidence of the actual impression He produced. Whether everything happened or not just as it is described, these stories help to shew what Jesus really was. If they do not give us a photograph, they help us to a true portrait and are invaluable as a picture of His personality. This was the kind of thing people believed about Him. Particular beliefs are always dependent on knowledge and experience in general, though as regards many beliefs we hold it is the knowledge and experience of other people that we have to trust. In the time of our Lord no one had the knowledge of natural phenomena that modern science has given us. There was nothing like the same idea of 'laws' of Nature. The world, to the people living in it then, was a world in which anything could happen, and no one knew how it came about. Everything was referred either to chance, or to the direct action of God or spirits with superhuman powers—the evil in the world espe-

cially to evil spirits, 'demons' or 'devils', of whom there were legions (Mk. v, 9; Lk. viii, 30).

Disease in particular was believed to be caused by these evil spirits. It was believed that there were demons of fever and deafness and dumbness and other maladies, and that they could enter into human beings and 'possess' them. In order to cure the person afflicted by the disease, the demon must be driven out. This could only be done by bringing to bear on him—not on the person but on the demon—the power of a superior spirit, mightier in the hierarchy of spirits than himself, whose order to quit he must obey. It was necessary to know the right spirit to invoke in each case and in his name adjure the evil spirit to go. So there were 'doctors' of that time whose books of prescriptions included what we should call magical formulas to be used in such cases to 'exorcize' the evil spirit, and these 'exorcists' were often successful in curing their patients, as quack-doctors are today. It was this theory of the cause of disease that was generally accepted at the time and underlies the narratives of the Gospels.

Jesus at least acted on this theory, and it was as a great exorcist of evil spirits that His fame first spread among the people. In dealing with demoniacs He used no magical formula like ordinary exorcists.[1] He treats them as being under some immoral influence which only the power of God can counteract, and He seems to regard them as having lost the power to will and needing some force to act on them in spite of themselves. Yet in His treatment of them there is implicit an appeal to their own true personality as distinguished from the devil that must be expelled. Jesus ranges Himself against the evil spirit, and it was His personal influence that secured the victory. What He relied on was the power of faith in the superiority of God, who willed nothing but good for His children, over the Devil. Spirit is pitted against spirit. 'With authority' ('and power', Lk.) He commands the unclean spirits and they 'obey Him' (or 'come out', Lk.). See Mk. i, 27.

[1] The survival in two narratives of the Aramaic words He used in addressing the patients (*Taleitha Koum*, Mk. v, 41, and *Ephphatha*, Mk. vii, 84) may be due to popular feeling that there was a virtue in the actual words by which the cure was effected.

In the summary statements (Mk. i, 32; Lk. vi, 17 f.; Mt. x, 8) He is said to have cast out many devils; but particulars are given of only four cases in Mark (Mk. i, 23-28, Lk. iv, 33-37; Mk. v, 1-20, Lk. viii, 26-39, Mt. viii, 28-34; Mk. ix, 14-29, Lk. ix, 37-43, Mt. xvii, 14-21; Mk. vii, 24-30, Mt. xv, 21-28), and two, or possibly three, others in Luke and Matthew (Lk. xi, 14, 15, Mt. xii, 22 and probably the same case in Mt. ix, 32-34; Lk. xiii, 10-17). In only three of these six cases are any symptoms described which imply violent 'fits' (epilepsy or mania). The cases added by Luke and Matthew are similar to cases in Mark which are not attributed to demonic possession, and this shews perhaps that Luke and Matthew (or their source Q) tended to account for all disease by 'possession' and to regard all our Lord's cures as a part of the war He waged with the Spirit of Evil.

Modern medical science does not assume evil spirits (that is, intelligent beings of a different order from men) as the cause of diseases of the body, such as fevers and deafness and blindness and paralysis; nor yet of diseases of the mind,

such as mania and epilepsy. There is today a tendency rather to trace back diseases of the mind to physical causes. But we are still very far from knowing all the causes of mental derangement. When we say of a man that he is 'not himself' or 'out of his mind', we are saying that he is under some influence alien from his nature, and foreign and hostile to his true character. Something or other from outside has got into him, and must be got rid of. It may be a microbe, or it may be an idea. 'Body' and 'mind' react so closely on one another all the time that nothing that affects the one can fail to affect the other also. A disordered body may set up mental disease, and a disordered mind in the patient himself seems often to be a cause of physical disease.

Jesus was not a medical man, either of His own age or of ours, and we may ignore the theory of demonic possession. We shall go to the doctors of today to learn the general rules and principles we ought to follow in order to keep our bodies in healthy condition, and most of them will tell us that we have to see that our minds are healthy

too, if we are to keep our bodies 'fit'. We have to exercise and train our minds and control our thoughts in the right way in order to be well. And this is where the power of Jesus was certainly exercised. It was His own trust in God and His own confidence in the victory of good over evil that He passed on to others. They caught it from Him. He was able to drive out the fear by which they were possessed and bring back calm and hope to their minds, and so to create or restore the conditions favourable to the health of their bodies.

The miracles recorded of Him can be grouped in two chief classes:

(1) those affecting persons, cures of diseases, and

(2) those affecting the physical conditions of the world or 'Nature'; though these are never mere wonders, but always have the relief of persons in distress in view.

Jesus always refused to gratify people who wanted Him to work a miracle just to shew His power or justify Himself (see Mk. viii, 11, 12; Lk. xi, 29; Mt. xvi, 4). He would not depend

on miracles (cf. the story of the Temptation in Chapter II). He did not wish to base the teaching He had to give, and His appeal to men's hearts and wills, on the cures He could perform. He would tell the persons He had healed or their friends not to tell anyone about it (e.g. Mk. v, 43, vii, 36). Moreover He did not wish the power to be regarded as personal and peculiar to Himself. The one occasion on which He is recorded to have exulted is on the return of disciples whom He had sent out on an experimental mission by themselves, when they reported to Him their success in curing diseases in the words 'even the demons are subject to us in thy name' (Lk. x, 17-24; Mt. xi, 25-27). The cures were signs to Jesus that the power of God was asserting its sovereignty over the powers of evil in the world. A new era was beginning, and He found proof of it in the fact that it was not only He Himself through whom the cures could be wrought.

The power of exorcizing demons and healing diseases could be exercised effectively by His disciples, or even, without His disapproval, by one who was not a disciple (Mk. ix, 38-40; Lk.

ix, 49, 50).[1] He attributed the cure not to any power of His own but to God, bidding the people cured give thanks to Him. See, for example, the case of the Gerasene demoniac whom He bids go and tell his friends 'all that the Lord has done for him' (Mk. v, 19). Luke (viii, 39) gives the true sense by substituting 'God' for 'the Lord'. Again, in the case of the paralytic borne by four, it is said (Mk. ii, 12) that all the people 'glorified God', recognizing, that is, God as the source of the power, and giving thanks to Him. This is an aspect of the 'miracles' that is retained by Matthew but in particular emphasized by Luke, alike in his independent narratives (e.g. Lk. v, 17, vii, 16, xvii, 18) and by additions to narratives he takes over from Mark (e.g. Lk. xviii, 43 compared with Mk. x, 52).

Again, according to Mark (vi, 5) Jesus could not effect any cures unless the sufferers, or their friends for them, shewed that they had faith that they could be cured. And from some of the stories we can see that He adopted a method of treatment which would stimulate in the patient

[1] Matthew omits this.

the expectation of cure and so enlist in the task all his own capacities for recovery. Jesus let expectation and suggestion work before He gave the order to use the lame legs or the paralysed hand.

The narratives are usually very condensed. The bare story is told as shortly as possible, often as though the cure was easy and instantaneous. But some of the stories shew that it was not easily, nor without strain and cost to Himself, that Jesus exercised the healing power. There was on His part not only sympathy with the sufferer and his friends—the taking upon Himself some of their suffering and sharing it with them, but also an output of nervous energy brought to bear on the patient. It is Mark especially who sets facts of this kind before us. Matthew's narratives, even when copied from Mark, omit these vivid bits of the historical setting; just as they tend to omit also little details about things Jesus did in the course of the cure, like touching the parts affected. It would seem that some Christians at an early date were not interested in the means which Jesus adopted in His cures, which

were in general use at the time,[1] and preferred to think of Him as having only to 'say the word' and it was done. This is a view of the matter which inspires the fine story of the centurion and his servant which comes from the Q collection (Lk. vii, 2-10; Mt. viii, 5-13), but it is probably less close to the historical facts than are Mark's accounts.

The demands for faith which Jesus made were probably intended, and understood at the time, as demands for faith in the supreme power of God, always active and working but needing a response from man before it can be effective in the restoration of powers that man has lost. He appeals for faith and attributes the cure to the patient's faith. He also tries to secure the co-operation of all who are concerned—the patient's relations and friends as well as his own. He desired an intense vital sympathy and the fullest possible force of spirit to be brought to bear on

[1] A remarkable illustration of the kind of means that could be used is found in the story of the blind man in Jn. ix, 6: 'he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle and anointed his eyes with the clay'. Matthew tells of the touching of the eyes in a narrative of his own (ix, 27-31) and in the case of the two blind men (Mt. xx, 29-34, from Mk. x, 46-52).

the end in view. In the two or three cases which can be called cures wrought 'at a distance' it must be assumed that the sick person was aware that his friends were seeking for him the help of Jesus and that he was himself in a condition of expectancy: but Jesus takes pains to rouse the faith and hope of the friends and join them with Him in the output of psychic power by which the cure is made possible. If the powers set working were powers of God it was not necessary for Jesus to be locally in the presence of the sick person. It was His part to stimulate in men the consciousness of a divine power and life in which they might share and so to be the medium by which it became available for them and operative in them. They in turn could mediate it to others. In the things of the mind and the spirit we are all 'mediators' to one another. This fact of mediation plays a large part in later Christian doctrine. It is implied in all 'intercessory' prayer, and in our prayers for people who are in distress or danger or sickness we are trying to be the means of bringing the power and love of God to their help in a way not essentially different from

that in which cures of physical disease were 'mediated' by Jesus 'at a distance' with the co-operation of others.

Besides these narratives of cures of diseases of various types, not all of them of a hysterical or mental kind or attributed to evil spirits, there is one case narrated in the Gospel of Mark in which Jesus was believed to have restored life to a girl who was dead, the daughter of one Jaïrus; and the story is copied by Luke and Matthew (Mk. v, 21-24 and 35-43; Lk. viii, 40-42 and 49-56; Mt. ix, 18, 19 and 23-25). Yet in this case Jesus Himself said that she was not dead, but asleep; and it may have been a case of coma.

So, too, may have been the only other case of raising from the dead narrated in the Synoptic Gospels—the story of the widow's son at Nain which Luke alone narrates (Lk. vii, 11-17). Coma has often been mistaken for death, and in the East burial commonly follows quickly on death.

The splendid story of the raising of Lazarus comes to us in a Gospel written later than Mark

and Luke (Jn. xi, 1-46). The miracles recorded in this Gospel are more wonderful than those of the same kind in the earlier Gospels. Just a few representative cases are given—the infirm man had been thirty-eight years in his infirmity (Jn. v, 5), the blind man had been blind from birth (ix, 1), Lazarus had already been dead four days (xi, 39). Though the stories read as if they were photographs from the life, it is possible that the author intended them to be taken as symbolic pictures of the power and 'light' and 'life' that a disciple of Jesus actually found his discipleship brought him. 'Whereas I was blind, now I see' (Jn. ix, 25), or as St Paul put it, 'I have strength for everything [there's nothing I cannot do] in him that enableth me' (Phil. iv, 13).

In a separate class by themselves are the narratives that ascribe to Jesus miraculous powers over inanimate things. But it is only from our modern point of view that the cases are different from the others, and there is nothing in the Gospels to suggest that they involved any special effort or were regarded as specially remarkable.

They are represented as being for Jesus simple and natural actions that set men wondering. There are very few of these stories of 'miracles wrought on Nature'. It has been said that if we, with our modern knowledge and ideas, had been present on the various occasions, we might not have given the same account of what happened; and the actual facts may have been misreported or misunderstood. The narratives in this class are as follows:

(1) The stilling of the Tempest on the lake (Mk. iv, 35-41; Lk. viii, 22-25; Mt. viii, 18).

(2) The miraculous draught of fishes (Lk. v, 1-11, which is probably connected with the story in Jn. xxi, 1-13).

(3) The stater in the fish's mouth (Mt. xvii, 24 ff.).

Of these three cases Dr Westcott wrote: 'The unexpected haul, the sudden lull of a storm in a mountain lake, the coin in the fish's mouth, are incidents to which common experience can furnish abundant parallels. The miracle lies in the circumstances and not in the mere fact'. None of the incidents need have been miraculous in the

ordinary sense of the word. The saying about the stater (shekel) may have been humorous, a way of telling Peter to go and catch fish to sell and get the money wanted. But Matthew understood it to imply supernatural knowledge on the part of Jesus, just as Luke understood the story of the great catch of fish which he records.

(4) The multiplication of loaves and fish, of which we have duplicate accounts—a shorter one giving the number as 4000, Mark (viii, 1-9), which Matthew (xv, 32-39) but not Luke repeats, and a longer one giving the number as 5000 (Mk. vi, 39 ff.; Lk. ix, 13 ff.; Mt. xiv, 16 ff., with Jn. vi, 1-15).

(5) The change of water into wine in Jn. ii, 1-11.

Various suggestions have been made as to the facts that underlay the first of these two stories. It may have been that a metaphor used by Jesus was misunderstood, or that He had been preaching to a crowd in a desert place and they had said that He fed them with 'the bread of life' and they felt no hunger, though the only food they

had among them was a few loaves and fishes. (See Jn. vi, 35, 'I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger'.) Or the origin of the story may have been a symbolic distribution of bread suggestive of the eucharist of later times (as it is interpreted in Jn. vi). A story of a similar kind is related of the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings iv, 42-44.

(6) The withering of the fig-tree (Mk. xi, 12-14, 20-25 where the withering is noticed next day and Mt. xxi, 18-22 where it happens instantly). For this miracle Luke substitutes the parable of the Barren Fig-Tree (Lk. xiii, 6-9). The narrative has close affinity with tales related in the apocryphal gospel of the Infancy and is the only one of its kind in the Synoptic Gospels. We seem to have Luke's authority for regarding it as unhistorical. It does not fit in with the portraiture of Jesus in the rest of the New Testament.

Besides these there is the story of Jesus walking on the water which is told by Mark (vi, 45-52), repeated with additions that heighten the effect by Matthew (xiv, 22-23) and, in language

that makes a non-miraculous interpretation of the story possible, by John (vi, 15-21).[1] Luke does not repeat this story but (iv, 16-30) tells of an occasion on which Jesus vanished from the midst of a crowd. These are the only narratives in all our Gospels that represent our Lord's natural body as being possessed of capacities different in kind from those of ordinary human bodies. At an early time there were people who, just because they believed that Jesus was the Christ, or a divine being, could not believe that He actually had a human body, or, as they put it, had 'come in flesh' (see Jn. iv, 2, 3). But it is an essential part of the doctrine of the Church about Him that He had complete manhood and a genuinely human body like all human bodies; and these stories probably have their place in our Gospels because they convey a vivid picture of the impression He produced of being able to come to the help of His followers and assure them of His presence, however great their need,

[1] The phrase used in Mark and in John may mean not 'on the sea' but 'by the sea-side'; but Matthew's phrase means 'on the sea', and the same sense is probably intended by John as well as by Mark.

and to baffle His opponents, as at the end of His life He triumphed over death.

If today we read all these stories as true pictures of what He is able to be to His disciples we shall find in them the value they have for us. They are all examples of His power to remedy the ills of life in the world as it is, pain, disease, hunger, anxiety, despair, and to bring to men knowledge of 'the things that belong unto peace' (Lk. xix, 42).

ADDITIONAL NOTE

Specially notable as shewing that the cures were not effected easily are the narratives in Mk. viii, 22-26 (a blind man, where the cure is not effected at once, but in two stages) and Mk. vii, 32-36 (a deaf and dumb man).[1] Neither of these stories is repeated by either Luke or Matthew, but Matthew's case of the blind and dumb demoniac (Mt. xii, 22) and Luke's of the dumb demoniac (Lk. xi, 14) are probably derived from

[1] It is notable how in both these cases Jesus takes the patient away by himself. So, too, in the case of Jaïrus's daughter (Mk. v, 37) He lets only Peter and James and John be present.

Mark's account, with all the details which they did not care to repeat omitted. With these narratives should be read, as cases of cure at a distance, the stories of the Syrophœnician girl (Mk. vii, 24-30; Mt. xv, 21-28) and the centurion's servant (Lk. vii, 1-10; Mt. viii, 5-13), of which the story of the nobleman's son in Jn. iv, 46 ff. is probably another version.

We have, also, to remember that the stories do not come from people with scientific training, and the diseases may not always have their right names given them. A distinction is sometimes made between 'organic' and 'functional' diseases. If an organ is destroyed, no way of restoring it is known: but when the organ is intact but not acting properly it may be made to 'function', to do the work it ought to do, again. None of these distinctions were in the minds of the people who told about the 'mighty works' Jesus did, and the authors of our Gospels make no discrimination. They tell of ailments similar to some that are curable today by suggestion and faith-healing, and equally readily they tell of some of which modern medicine knows no cure. Few of the

stories contain anything of the mere wonder-working kind that we find in the later 'apocryphal' gospels, where tales that are quite incredible are told of the ways in which Jesus acted. But, nevertheless, there are numerous references to beliefs of the people that the healing power was something belonging to Jesus which He could use or not as He liked, and popular opinion attributed to His person a sanctity and virtue which might be called 'magical'. He was Himself, so to say, the talisman. His touch could convey a blessing or a cure (Mk. x, 13; viii, 22). It might not be necessary even for Him to touch them. It was enough that they should touch Him (Mk. iii, 10, vi, 56, 'as many as touched him were made whole'; Lk. vi, 19, 'and all the multitude sought to touch Him: for power came forth from him, and healed them all'). This popular belief is shewn in its strongest form in the story of the woman in Mk. v, 25 ff. and Lk. viii, 43 ff., in which Jesus Himself is said to have felt power go forth from Him when He was touched. Matthew curtails the story and omits this part. Perhaps its historical basis is the

memory that Jesus did find His healing work exhausting. Apart from this one story there is nothing in the Gospels that suggests that Jesus Himself would have sanctioned this kind of popular belief which is seen again in a still more exaggerated form in some of the stories in Acts, e.g. v, 15, xix, 12, and at later periods in connexion with 'relics' of 'martyrs' and 'saints'.

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THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE RESURRECTION

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE RESURRECTION

THERE are two stories of the Passion, one in Mark, which is followed by Matthew, and one in Luke. These two stories had better be read as they stand, without attempting to harmonize them (Mk. xiv, 32-xv, 47 ‖ Mt. xxvi, 36-xxvii, 61 and Lk. xxii, 39-xxiii, 56).

As the story represents the course of events, Jesus was the victim of the jealousy and hatred and the political fears of the religious leaders of the Jews. 'Vested interests' were at stake. There was all the fear of losing place and power: 'He or we must go'. He was a frank critic of much of their teaching and practice. The Levite and the Pharisee are pilloried for ever in the Parable of the Good Samaritan and of the Pharisee and the Publican. The way of love that

Jesus preached was a revolutionary doctrine in their eyes. He used them as examples of what ought not to be done. He ridiculed their ideas of what were important religious duties and observances. He professed to teach a higher way. It was true that He paid the Temple tax, and sent lepers to the priests and kept the festivals; but He broke the rules about the Sabbath. If He did not intend to rouse the people to revolt, He was causing a very dangerous state of feeling among them. In the eyes of the official class He was a dangerous dreamer or fanatic and His teaching was likely to lead a popular rising to free Palestine from its Roman conquerors, which would endanger their own political power. Such popular risings were not uncommon and they had no chance of success. From the point of view of the Jewish religious leaders, the claim to be Messiah was blasphemy and punishable by death. (Blasphemy, it must be remembered, is still punishable by law though not so severely as then; and, again, the Church has frequently burnt heretics. Always the charge whether of blasphemy or of heresy has meant that the person

accused gave utterance to opinions which his accusers regarded as outrageously contrary to the truth about sacred things.)

Jesus saw the failure of His mission and His own death threatening, and He went to meet the threat, anxious but resolute. The saying at the Supper (Mk. xiv, 25), 'I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until . . .', leaves open the possibility that the Kingdom of God might be manifested at once. The scene in Gethsemane shews that He still cherished hope of a different issue from that which actually occurred. Throughout the trial and the closing scene with its indignity and torture He maintains His resolute bearing, but the cry on the Cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Mk. xv, 34; Mt. xxvii, 46), sounds a note of such despair that other accounts (Luke and John) of the Passion omit it.

It has been pointed out that it is the first verse of a Psalm that ends with confident praise, and the triumphant issue may have been in the mind of Jesus. If it were not so, but in the last moment of consciousness He lost the sense of trust

in God in which He had lived His life, then He had to endure the supreme tragedy of human experience—to feel that the ideal you have followed all your life is only a will o' the wisp, you have failed in what you had set your heart on, or you are deserted by the one friend and helper on whom throughout your life you have relied, for whom a whole life has been spent. And when the incident has been understood in this way, this 'dereliction of the Cross' has figured largely among the sufferings which Christ bore 'for us men and for our salvation'.

He felt He was alone. There is a kind of solitariness in the deepest religious experiences that come to men. Jesus had often felt this; but He had been sustained by the conviction that God was with Him. Now He is left all alone. He, who had been confident that the Love of God would break the power of evil entrenched in the selfishness of men, and that His own death would inaugurate the coming of a new age, in which God would vindicate the truth of His gospel of Love, failed in His confidence at the last. All seemed to be lost. The disciples had already

forsaken Him and fled. Only some of the women were looking on afar off. Had this been the end, we should have known nothing about Jesus to-day. But between this tragedy and His triumph stands the fact which is described in the stories of the Resurrection. It was the belief that Jesus who had been crucified and died on the Cross had risen again to life, or had been raised by God (for both ways of putting the belief were used), that restored to the small company of His disciples their belief in Him, and finally convinced them that He was the Messiah and would come again in glory to establish the Kingdom of God and bestow its blessings on all who had faith in Him and followed the way He announced. It was this belief that brought back to life their faith in Him, and made them eager to tell to others the story of Jesus and the gospel He taught, fearless in face of opposition and ridicule, ready to face the charge of being revolutionaries ('turning the world upside down', Acts xvii, 6) and to lose their own lives, if need be, in the cause.

Individual disciples and small groups of them

together were convinced that they had seen Jesus and heard Him speak to them.

The Gospels have different stories of these appearances (Mk. xvi, 1-8; Mt. xviii, 1-10 and 16-20; Lk. xxiv, 1-53). Mark tells only of the visit of the three women to the tomb, their finding it empty, and an angel's announcement to them that He had risen and would shew Himself in Galilee; but it is possible that the last page of the Gospel was lost and that there was in it an account of an appearance to some of the disciples in Galilee, as there is in Matthew (xxviii, 16-20) who seems to have been mainly dependent on Mark in this part of his Gospel, though (unlike Mark) he represents the women as hurrying off to tell the disciples and being met by Jesus on their way, so that he tells of an appearance both in Jerusalem and in Galilee.

Luke, on the other hand, has nothing to say about any appearance in Galilee, but relates other stories of appearances at Jerusalem.

In any case it is not profitable to try to piece the stories together so as to form a consecutive narrative. It is better to take each one by itself

as a description of what was felt by some of those who had been most intimate with Jesus and to try to understand what it was they felt about Him, leaving alone the difficult question as to what it was exactly that happened. It is, for example, only Luke who says that He ate and drank with them (Luke xxiv, 36-43; Acts x, 41 and probably i, 4), and the true historical memory that underlies this very materialistic detail may be that it was when they were together at their supper in the evening that they had the sense of His being with them. If some of the stories are more like pictures or parables than actual photographs in words, they undoubtedly represent the conviction of some of the earliest disciples that Jesus was alive again and able to make His will known to them through His spirit. And it was this conviction that was proof to them that Jesus was appointed by God to reveal to men the truth and be the means by which they might become His sons and members of His Kingdom, winning Salvation. What Jesus was in His life and what He taught was what God wanted men to be.

Read the stories one by one as they stand. (Note Matthew's love of earthquakes and Luke's stress on physical proofs.)

In the past, from the time when the Gospels were current, Christians have commonly accepted all these stories as true descriptions of events that actually happened, and of the ways by which the belief in the Resurrection was established. Much careful thought and labour has been spent in the attempt to understand and explain the exact sequence of the various appearances from the first to the last, and to harmonize what seem to be inconsistencies.

Free criticism of the stories, by those who profess themselves Christians, on the lines which modern scholars follow in studying literature and history that is not sacred, and the literature and history of religions other than the Christian Religion, has only lately become general. The stories have been taken in the past at their 'face value'. Today, too, there are many scholars who think that the difficulty of accounting for the belief in the Resurrection in the earliest group of disciples is insuperable, unless the facts were as they

are stated (namely, that the Tomb in which Jesus was laid was found empty and His body sublimated, so that He was able to materialize it and dematerialize it at will).

Others are of opinion that the fact was that Jesus in the spirit made His influence felt so strongly by some of His disciples that they did not distinguish between bodily and spiritual presence. He was there, and they saw Him, and heard Him, as they had seen and heard Him in His lifetime. He came to them, singly or in little groups gathered together; and the impression on some of them was so vivid as to produce immediate conviction, and the conviction of the few was contagious and spread to others, who had not themselves 'seen' or 'heard'.

Here again, as in the earlier stories of the experiences of Jesus Himself, such as the Baptism and the Temptation, it would be necessary to distinguish between the fact of the experience and the description of it which the person undergoing it gave. And on this theory some of the stories and the details of them, including the story of the empty tomb, would have arisen at

a later time, after the fact of the Resurrection had become central in the faith of the Christian community, as natural inferences from their experience of His presence with them. They would be intended as honest explanations of the belief which was established. He had triumphed over Death; He had shewn Himself able to make Himself felt by His disciples to be alive and to raise again their enthusiastic faith in Him. He had escaped from the tomb; 'Where, grave, is thy victory?' There was the prophecy that 'God's holy One' should not be left 'to see corruption'—a prophecy that may well have been quoted by Peter in his first sermon to the people after Pentecost as reported in Acts (ii, 27), and as soon as it was applied to Jesus (see what was said in Chapter I) would have encouraged belief in the empty tomb.

Most of the stories were probably told again and again long before they were written down. It is common experience that stories of wonders do not lose in the telling, and all would allow that some 'embroidery' may have been added. But the stories, as we have them in the Gospels, are

so circumstantial and so simply expressed, that readers of them may well find it difficult to believe that they are not records of actual events exactly as they occurred. They may be familiar with the skill of the storyteller in fiction from the fourteenth century B.C. to the twentieth century A.D., but they will feel that these stories of the Resurrection of Jesus are based on actual experience.

In the present state of our knowledge that is a reasonable position to take up in regard to them. But there is another position that many believers in Jesus occupy today that is also reasonable. That the power of God was actually working in Jesus ('God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself', 2 Cor. v, 19), no one who believes in God can doubt. Nor again can anyone doubt that the spirit of Jesus has been a living power in the world ever since, inspiring men and women to high and noble life and service to mankind. The only question that can arise is whether the remarkable phenomena described in the stories of the Resurrection are to be regarded as having actually happened as they are told, or

whether the manifestations of the Risen Jesus were made in the Spirit to the spirits of His disciples. In the present state of our knowledge of the ways in which God works in the world, in and through men, and of the ways in which disciples of Jesus ever since have become convinced of His spiritual presence and will and power to help them, it is reasonable to suppose that the first manifestations were of the same spiritual order as the later ones, and in any case not of a physical, visible, audible kind.

POPULAR OPINION ABOUT JESUS IN HIS LIFETIME

CHAPTER NINE

POPULAR OPINION ABOUT JESUS IN HIS LIFETIME

'TRULY this man was a son of God' (Mk. xv, 39). So said the centurion in charge of the Crucifixion. It was a soldier's estimate of Jesus, with nothing to know Him by but the way in which He bore Himself through the trial and the execution. The phrase 'a son of God' on a Roman soldier's lips would mean little more than a great man, a hero. Luke gives his saying as 'Certainly this was a righteous man' (Lk. xxiii, 47). Matthew keeps Mark's version. Our translation 'the' son of GOD makes the centurion say what he could not have meant. It gives us, however, the estimate of Jesus at which Christians had arrived at the time at which Mark was written, some thirty years at least after the events. It is worth while looking through the Gospels to

see what had been thought about Jesus in His lifetime. We seem to be able to distinguish three or four different circles of opinion, though, no doubt, opinions fluctuated in them all, and it is clear that to the end Jesus puzzled everyone—those who were brought into closest contact with Him as well as those who judged only by what they heard about Him.

In popular opinion He was a great prophet, inspired by God; 'speaking with authority' straight out of His own mind (see *supra*, Chapter III), and having great gifts of healing the sick and driving out the demons of disease. 'A man approved of God unto you by mighty works . . . which God did by him in the midst of you', 'who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him'. These two descriptions of Him, attributed to Peter, in the early days after His death (Acts ii, 22, x, 38) express an estimate that the Gospels shew was widespread in His lifetime. The common people, the crowds, were impressed in this vague way. Sometimes there was excitement. What He said and what He did roused interest

and expectancy about the coming of the Kingdom of God; but it was all indefinite, and they waited to see what would happen, impressed, but not convinced that anything would come of it. What is said in the Fourth Gospel (Jn. vi, 15), that Jesus once went into retirement because He was afraid the people would seize Him and make Him a king, is not supported by the earlier Gospels; nor is the statement (Jn. vii, 31) that many were led to think of Him as one who might be the Messiah Himself. Popular opinion expected in the Messiah something quite different from what people in general found in Jesus; but there might be more to come.

It was this feeling that prevailed and formed opinion in what we may call ecclesiastical and political circles, represented in the Gospels by the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, like our clergy and bishops and politicians. As soon as their attention was called to the new Teacher, and they heard of the movement among the people which He caused, some of them went down from Jerusalem to investigate and report, and we can see their watchfulness and suspicion turn-

ing into scarcely disguised hostility (Lk. xi, 53, 54). There had been no hostility on their part to John the Baptizer: why was it roused against Jesus? We can see how it was from the point of view both of the ecclesiastics and of the politicians of the time.

As regards the ecclesiastics, with much of the teaching of Jesus none of the religious leaders of the time could have had any quarrel. But His attitude as a whole was a challenge to the existing religious system. He seemed to claim for Himself an insight into right and wrong without regard to any of the established standards of the religious people of the time. No religious institution was so closely guarded as the observance of the Sabbath. Incidents like those of His healing on the Sabbath (Mk. iii, 1-6 and Lk. vi, 6-11; Mt. xii, 9-14; cf. Lk. xiii, 10-21; Jn. v, 1-18) and letting His disciples pluck ears of corn (Mk. ii, 23-28 and ‖s) were breaches of the little rules by which it was maintained; and His saying that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, might be applied to every kind of religious institution and observance.

It was the 'thin end of the wedge'. It would cut deep into the system of religion, if you might always be asking what good purpose this or that practice served. It would do away with all 'authority' in religion.

Moreover when they tackled Him on any of these points they always came off worst. Sometimes He would sweep them away with answers like those about the Sabbath, or about the clumsy and malicious charge that He was in league with the devil to cast out devils (Mk. iii, 22-27; Lk. xi, 14-23; Mt. xii, 22-30). At other times He parried their 'crafty' questions so cleverly that they were reduced to ignominious silence before the people. He was not at all humble to His inquisitors, and they found themselves hoist by their own petard.

A good example of this is the question about the tax that had to be paid to the Romans (Mk. xii, 13-17; Mt. xxii, 15-22). They thought they had got Him on the horns of a dilemma. If He said it was right to pay the tax He would be recognizing the legitimacy of the Roman conquest and rule, their subjection to the powers

that be; and He would lose the sympathy of all good Jewish patriots who looked forward to freedom from the hateful foreign usurpation. If, on the other hand, He said it was not right, His opponents could at once denounce Him to the Roman governor as a rebel aiming at insurrection. He quietly turned their attack by saying in effect that there were duties both to governments and to God, and both sets of duties must be observed.

And again He was not always content merely to propound His own ideas about religion and what God wanted of men, and leave them to work. He sometimes pointed His teaching sharply by contrast with the ideas and ways of the religious people of His time, especially the Pharisees. There has never been any impeachment of a class of religious leaders so severe as that in which He pilloried the Pharisees (Mk. xii, 38-40; Lk. xx, 45-47; cf. Lk. xi, 37-54; Mt. xxiii, 1-36), and scholars who know what there is to be known about them have thought His attack on them unfair. They were only, it is said, like the upholders of a religious system in

all ages, they honestly thought that all the observances they practised were of value in keeping people in the way of true religion. The charge of 'hypocrisy' in particular which He brought against them has been held to be unjust. But our Lord's denunciation of them seems to have been made late in His career, when their opposition to Him had hardened and He regarded them as wilfully blind and sinning against light. And this in His eyes was the sin of sins, to pose as religious and yet be devoid of love, to shut your ears to the call of truth and slander one whose religion was purer and deeper than your own. This was the sin that Jesus stigmatized as sin against the spirit of holiness (or the Holy Spirit) which should not be forgiven. But in any case, people who were punctilious in all the conventional observances of religious rites and ceremonies, and yet were uncharitable and censorious towards others, were putting the little things in the place of the great things of Religion; and Jesus had no mercy on them. It was not the observances of organized religion, or careful regard for the institutions of the past, that He

condemned. 'These things ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone' (Mt. xxiii, 23).[1] But He insisted on putting first things first, and this was just what He said the Scribes and Pharisees were not doing. So in their eyes He was a dangerous teacher who was bringing them into discredit and undermining the religion of the people. If a few among them could appreciate the spiritual quality and inwardness of His teaching, yet as a class they could not; and they wished Him silenced and out of the way. His outspokenness was offensive to themselves and dangerous to the established religion.

Dangerous also He was in the eyes of the politicians. He had a great reputation among the people, many of whom were on the look-out for a chance of throwing off the Roman yoke. They might come to regard Him as a heaven-sent leader, a national Saviour, to restore the Kingdom to Israel. He was always talking about the

[1] This saying which is only given by Mt. and as it stands puts the tithing of mint and anise and cummin among the things that ought to be done, can only be taken as indicating the attitude of Jesus to the institutions of Religion in the most general way.

Kingdom of God and professing to see signs of its coming. If He headed a revolt, the politicians would of course have nothing to do with it, and it would soon be crushed. But there would be difficulties with the Roman authorities. Some of the blame would fall, however unjustly, on themselves; and some of the privileges and partial self-government the Romans allowed them might be withdrawn. Or if the revolt, once started, spread widely, as it easily might, the whole nation and Jerusalem itself might be wiped out, and they, the ruling class, who had made terms with Rome, would have lost everything. Jesus was not like the ordinary fanatical leaders of insurrections; but the things He said were disturbing, and the crowds He collected might lose their heads and force Him into a *rôle* He had not intended to play. 'It is better that one man should die rather than a nation perish' was the opinion of the ruling class about Him (cf. Jn. xviii, 14).

Of His own professed disciples we must distinguish between the rank and file and the few who formed a kind of inner circle even among

the band who are called the Twelve. The former reflected the opinion of the people who came in crowds to see and hear Him, attracted and impressed like the others; only different from them in being more closely attached to Him and sharing His daily life, and helping to spread the good news of the coming of the Kingdom, and even sent out by Him to cure diseases in His name. All were puzzled, believing in Him as a prophet sent by God and destined to play a great part in connexion with the promised Kingdom. Could He possibly be the Messiah Himself?

Early in the days of His ministry, when His fame was already widespread, John the Baptizer had sent some of his disciples to ask Him the plain question, 'Art thou he that cometh (*or*, "is to come")?' (Read Lk. vii, 18-23; Mt. xi, 2-6 (Q).) But 'he that cometh' does not here mean 'the Messiah'. The question referred to a tradition that before the Messiah was manifested the prophet Elijah would reappear as his forerunner. It does not imply that John thought that Jesus was the Messiah, and the answer that Jesus

sent back to him was ambiguous. It was neither Yes nor No. He left it to John to judge for himself, claiming only that the facts shewed that His ministry was being rich in fruits. It was not till a later stage of this ministry, after Peter's confession at Caesarea and the Transfiguration experience, that according to Mark He said the Elijah *redivivus* of the tradition had already come and been disposed of (Mk. ix, 11-13). He meant, no doubt, that John himself had played the part of the prophet who was to precede the Messiah; and Matthew, in copying Mark's narrative here, adds the definite statement that the disciples understood He meant this (Mt. xvii, 10-13). Yet at the earlier stage, after the messengers from John had gone away, according to the narrative of Q (Lk. vii, 24-35; Mt. xi, 7-19) He had already identified John with the messenger of the Messiah; and Matthew, though not Luke, attributes to Him the plain identification with Elijah, though in the apologetic form, 'And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear' (Mt. xi, 14, 15). The true historical se-

quence is probably that of Mark's narrative, and Matthew, in inserting the saying here, is anticipating the order of events, though not the train of ideas in the mind of Jesus or the inklings and hopes of at least the inner circle of His immediate followers.

Of these Peter was often the spokesman and it was by him that their inklings and hopes were blurted out when Jesus asked them what people thought about Him, and then what they themselves thought—'But who say ye that I am?' Peter's pent up feelings burst through in the answer 'Thou art Messiah (the Christ)'.[1]

Jesus did not repudiate this estimate of Himself—the highest that a Jew could conceive of anyone. But He put it aside as a belief of His

[1] Luke's version of Peter's saying, 'the anointed of God', is no more than an explanation of the Hebrew term for Greek readers; but Matthew, by his addition of the words 'the Son of the living God', puts into Peter's mouth a phrase which belongs to a later stage of Christian thought. Matthew's further addition (verses 17-19), which represents Jesus as welcoming with enthusiasm Peter's profession of belief, and calling him the rock on which He would build His church, and promising him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and conferring on him the power of binding and loosing, is also believed by many students to be unhistorical:—one of the legendary additions in Matthew's Gospel that shew us beliefs current in some circles of the Church at a time a good deal later than the lifetime of Jesus.

intimate disciples that must not be talked of to others: they must tell no one else such a thing about Him: and at once He began to speak of the Messiah in the third person by the title 'the Son of Man' as one who, when he came, would suffer much and be disowned by the ruling classes of his nation and be killed.[1] By this time at all events He foresaw what would be His own fate and He warned His disciples that, if they were right in thinking He was the Messiah, they must begin to revise their ideas about the Messiah; for He would certainly not be the kind of Messiah they expected, and His followers must be prepared to sacrifice everything, even their lives, in His service. These were hard sayings

[1] The term 'Son of Man', which Jesus now uses in the third person, was intentionally ambiguous. The people generally would not suppose that He meant Himself. If they understood that He meant the Messiah, they would see that He was giving them an entirely new idea about the Messiah. No one till Jesus had ever conceived of a suffering Messiah who would be rejected and killed when He came. It was too much for Peter, and, impulsive as ever, he at once protested. The words Matthew adds to Mark's account are at least true to life. He could not believe that this was to be the fate of his Master. It was the triumphant conqueror on whom he had pinned his faith. Matthew, from the position of later Christian faith, removes the ambiguity in the third personal 'Son of Man' and says that Jesus began from that time to teach His disciples what would happen to Himself (Mt. xvi, 21).

even for the most willing and loyal. (Read Mk. viii, 31-ix, 1; Lk. ix, 22-27; Mt. xvi, 21-28.)

Down to the end some of His disciples cherished the belief that He would somehow prove Himself Messiah, in spite of His strange teaching and His unwillingness to assert Himself and plainly declare His Messiahship. It is not improbable that Judas Iscariot, who was evidently one of the chief disciples,[1] was one of the most convinced believers, and intended to force His hand and oblige Him to shew the powers He had in reserve. If so, the 'betrayal' which precipitated the issue, inevitable as it probably was, was yet as bad a betrayal as any of which a disciple could be guilty. He had enjoyed his Master's confidence and he would not keep His secret. His remorse, of which the story is told in Mt. xxvii, 3-10 and referred to incidentally in Acts i, 16-19, was not that of a common traitor, but rather of one who realized that he had blundered horribly and could not bear to survive his Master.

That they all forsook Him and fled when He

[1] The phrase ὁ εἷς τῶν δώδεχα in Mk. xiv, 10 may mean 'the first of the twelve'.

offered no resistance to arrest (Mk. xiv, 50; Mt. xxvi, 56), and that Peter denied all knowledge of Him (Mk. xiv, 66-72; Lk., Mt.), shews on what deaf ears His later teaching had fallen. They were still expecting for Him the kind of success that would justify their hopes.

We are concerned here only with opinion about Jesus in His lifetime, so far as we can learn from Mark and Q what people thought of Him, whether as faith-healer, or as prophet, or as possibly Messiah. But from the stories that were remembered and told about Him we can see what they thought in other ways. We see, for example, that 'the Man of Sorrows' would have been regarded as a miserably inadequate description of Him. A man of ideals must always feel the pain of the world as things are, and Jesus produced the impression that He had boundless sympathy, suffering with the suffering, sharing in the sorrowful experiences of others, ready to help to His utmost, open-hearted and accessible to everyone in trouble. Their desire to come to Him, or for Him to come to them, was the only introduction needed. Our Gospels were not com-

posed till a halo of reverence had surrounded Him that sometimes veils the natural sense of the facts that are recorded, but it is clear that He was not crushed by the pain of the world. To Him it was God's world. And if He was sometimes despondent He was more constantly buoyant and hopeful. If He was a Man of Sorrows He was also a Man of Joys. 'Weep with them that weep and rejoice with them that rejoice' is the gist of one of His remembered sayings (Lk. vii, 31, 32; Mt. xi, 16, 17); and what is told about Him shews that men and women found Him a congenial companion in their happy experiences and realized His joy in the beauty of Nature and the beauty of human affections, family life, friendship, thoughts, and words.

He left no writings. As it has been said, 'He is only recorded to have written once, and then it was on sand' (see Jn. viii, 6). But He was an artist in the making of phrases. His mere words have inspired a great literature, and this kind of inspiration was part of what people recognized in Him. 'Never man spake like this

man'. He seemed to have unerring insight into men's minds and feelings; He knew what was in man; and His words and similes opened out to them the truth about themselves and about GOD. It must be true. So it has been said that if there be GOD at all, He must be like the Father-GOD in whom Jesus believed. No other kind of GOD is credible. And so those who knew Him felt He was in close touch with GOD. They divined instinctively something about Him of the sacred, the holy, the GOD-like. If they found that in His company the best in themselves was brought out and strengthened, and comfort and courage came to them as they caught something of His confidence in GOD and the victory of good; yet sometimes it was the feeling of awe in His presence that prevailed. Such a saying as that of Peter (Lk. v, 8), 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord', even if it was prompted by wonder at the draught of fishes, expresses the kind of feeling He often aroused. It is disclosed quite incidentally in Mark's narrative when, with no reference to any special occurrence, it is said (Mk. x, 32), 'And they were in the way, going

up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed (or full of apprehension); and they that followed were afraid'. It is His own disciples who are apprehensive and afraid. No account of what people thought about Him in His lifetime is true unless it does justice to the evidence that, in spite of all His obvious humanity and intimate fellowship with them, they felt there was more in Him than they could grasp and understand, some unknown 'quantity' or 'quality' which, while it won them to Him, yet at the same time baffled them and sometimes awed them and almost frightened them away. It was not only that the gracious teacher and warm-hearted and hopeful friend could also be the stern and austere Master who could be withering in denunciation and demanded the 'impossible' from His friends and followers, though He said it was not impossible for just what was to be—'Ye shall be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt. v, 48). There was a veil of mystery surrounding Him, suggesting much more than met the eye or found expression in act and word; and it was to account

for this mystery and suggestiveness, part of the actual experience of those who knew Him in His lifetime in the world, that the later explanations and doctrines of the Church were devised.

THE STORIES OF THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS: THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS

CHAPTER TEN

THE STORIES OF THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS. THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS

I. The Stories of the Birth and Childhood of Jesus (Lk. : 5-ii, 52 and iii, 23-38; Mt. i, ii)

In contrast with Mark, Luke and Matthew aimed at giving as complete a Life of Jesus as they could. So they begin with a genealogical tree and stories about His birth and early years.

These stories are reserved for this place in our study of the Gospels because, properly speaking, they form no part of the story of the actual life of Jesus. There is no sign of any knowledge of them during His lifetime. There is no sign that the beliefs which they indicate had any influence in creating faith in Jesus among His earliest followers and adherents. That faith was the result of what they saw of the life and character of Jesus, of His vision and grasp of God and that

other 'unknown quantity' that seems to elude analysis. The reasoned faith of Christians in Jesus as divine has probably always depended on evidence as to what He actually was in His life in the world, and the place He has held in men's minds and hearts ever since, rather than on the beliefs as to the way in which He came into the world that these stories express. Nowhere in the rest of the New Testament is any argument drawn from them to support the teaching given about Him. It is possible to believe in Jesus as St Paul believed in Him, or to hold the faith of St John in Him as the incarnate Word of God, without believing in these stories.

They describe a wonderful origin for the person believed to be unique among men. The two stories of His Birth, given respectively by Luke and Matthew, seem to be independent of each other, and the two genealogies prefixed to them seem also to be independent of each other. They agree in the chief particular that Jesus had no human father, but was born out of the natural course of human generation. How far back behind the composition of these two Gospels this

tradition goes we have no means of knowing. Wherever the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were circulated Christians must have accepted the story as true, and it became the settled belief of the Church and no doubt helped to create and to confirm faith in Jesus as divine.

It is not likely that the story originated with either of the authors of these Gospels. Each of them treats the main point as one of the things he had to tell, though each handles it in his own way.

Matthew, seeing in the circumstances a fulfilment of the prophecy of Is. vii, 14, yet traces the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, although Joseph is not regarded as His natural father, and appears to be concerned to establish the fact that, according to Jewish law, He was the legitimate son of Joseph.

It is Luke's Gospel (chap. i, 5-ii, 52) that supplies the familiar details, and they are all narrated by him in a poetical setting, conspicuous for delicacy and beauty. They are, with some of the incidents narrated by Matthew, the only descriptions we have of the history of the early years

of Jesus. The narrative begins with the story of the birth of John the Baptizer, the precursor of Jesus. John's birth too is described as out of the normal course, just as the Jewish chroniclers, convinced that their race were the chosen people of God, described the birth of their ancestor Isaac as out of due course and brought about by the special immediate action of God (Gen. xviii, 11; cf. Heb. xi, 11).

It is no doubt possible, with full acceptance of all that modern science has contributed to knowledge of the regularity of the 'laws' of Nature, or the ways in which God works in the world, nevertheless to believe that at rare intervals there are special interventions of divine activity that bring about results which in the regular course of Nature, so far as it is known, could not be produced. No one can affirm that 'miracle' of this kind is impossible, and as regards these stories many Christian scholars today are content to rest in this position. There are many also who, though they would not regard belief in the miraculous birth as fundamental to their faith in Jesus, yet accept the belief on the ground that it is more

reasonable to believe that One who was admittedly unique among men had an origin as man that was unique.

A different position is occupied by others today who hold that it is not to the history but to the poetry of the Christian religion that these stories belong; that they have the style and manner of legend and poetry, and should be regarded as attempts to express the mystery that hung round Jesus—the something inexpressible in plain prose that ordinary men and women felt about Him. It is what has been styled above the 'unknown quantity' or 'quality' that remains when we have studied all the facts of His life that we can measure up and bring into relation to our ordinary experience. The Jesus who had created so great an impression by His Life and Death, and after His death had become a more living and greater power than He had been in His lifetime, must, it was thought, have been different from other men from the beginning. People felt there was something about Him that needed further explanation; and these stories of the circumstances of His Birth and Infancy sup-

plied what seemed to be lacking to account for His being the kind of person He was. He was the kind of person of whom, in those days, such stories could be told quite naturally and believed. That, according to this view of the question, is the historical value that they have for us, and, like the myths of Plato, they suggest what is real and true, though in the form of poetry and picture.

2. The Church and the Sacraments

The question has been put, whether Jesus intended to found a Church. The idea of founding a Church occurs only once in the Gospels and that in a passage in Matthew which has no parallel in Mark or Luke and is generally believed to represent a tradition that originated at a later time when Peter was regarded as having had a place among the apostles of more authority than he actually had (Mt. xvi, 17-20).[1]

What the evidence of the Gospels shews us

[1] As regards 'primacy' over the Church, it must be noted that any that there was, was exercised in the early Church not by Peter but by 'James, the Lord's brother' (Acts xv, 19), though Peter is the spokesman of the other apostles at first (Acts i-v).

plainly is that from the beginning Jesus gathered round Himself a small group of men as His 'disciples'.

Twelve of these, whose names are given, He is recorded to have 'chosen' or 'appointed' (Mk. iii, 13-19; Lk. vi, 12-19; and the list of names, Mt. x, 2-4). Luke adds that He named them 'apostles' and Matthew calls them 'the twelve apostles'. The word is used elsewhere of messengers, or envoys, or representatives, and Mark, who does not use the name in this place,[1] implies it when he says that Jesus appointed them 'that they might be with him and that he might *send them forth* to preach, and to have authority to cast out Devils' (cf. also Lk. ix, 1 and Mt. x, 1). Jesus took pains to bind these men as closely as possible to Himself and to one another, and to teach and train them to share His beliefs and ideals. We have seen that a good deal of what He was remembered to have taught is said to have been addressed to them in private.

[1] He only uses the name when mentioning their return from the preaching tour referred to below (Mk. vi, 30).

One occasion is recorded on which He formally sent them out (Mark says 'by two and two') on a tour of preaching and gave them instructions as to their conduct on their mission (Mk. vi, 7-13; Lk. ix, 1-5; Mt. x, 1-14).[1] Luke also relates the sending out of seventy others on another occasion, two and two, and the return of the seventy to Him at the end of a successful tour (Lk. x, 1-24). Seventy was regarded as a perfect number, and nothing more is known about these seventy, though, at a much later time, names for all of them were provided. The number twelve may have been chosen as being the number of the tribes of Israel, and the tradition that after the apostasy of Judas Iscariot another (Matthias) was appointed in his place (Acts i, 15-26) shews that the twelve were regarded as occupying a position of special importance in the whole body of disciples who had 'companied' together 'all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out' among them.

[1] The much expanded version of the instructions in Mt. x, 15-42 seems to be for the most part made up by a collection of sayings recorded separately on different occasions by Mark and Luke.

Jesus did, then, certainly, form at least the nucleus of what we should call a society, of which He was the head and the centre, with an inner circle of those who were most closely associated with Him. Of this inner circle the twelve were pledged particularly to active service in His lifetime, and afterwards had special honour and authority among the rest of the disciples or believers. The Acts of the Apostles shews what was believed at a later time to have been their place in the early community of Christians, but the urgency with which St Paul pressed his own claim to be regarded as an apostle (see especially Gal. i, ii and 1 Cor. ix) is the best possible proof of the esteem in which 'apostles' were held and of the authority conceded to them.

Beyond such training of the twelve as Jesus gave them there is no sign in the Synoptic Gospels that He attempted any organization of a society or instituted any new rites or ceremonies to be observed by His disciples in His lifetime. Afterwards there is no doubt that believers were admitted as members of the new society by Baptism, and Acts and St Paul's Epistles shew what

Baptism was believed to give them.[1] But that this 'Christian' Baptism began after the lifetime of Jesus appears from the facts (1) that there is no mention of it in the instruction to the twelve or the seventy when they were sent out on their missions, and (2) that in the one passage in the New Testament in which Jesus is said to have ordained the practice it is to the risen Jesus that the command to baptize is ascribed (Mt. xxviii, 16-20).[2] At a much later time it was argued that Christian Baptism was into the death and resurrection of Jesus (as St Paul described it) and so could not have existed in His lifetime.[3]

Again, as regards the practice of the Lord's Supper, the account of the Last Supper that is given in Mk. xiv, 12-25 contains no suggestion

[1] See especially Acts ii, 37, 38, 41, xxii, 16, and Rom. vi, 2-11, and No. 2 of this Series, ch. vi.

[2] The silence of the Synoptic Gospels on the subject is not outweighed, as regards the actual historical facts, by the statements in Jn. iii, 22, 26, which indeed, at least as regards Jesus Himself, the writer, or the editor, of the Gospel immediately afterwards corrects (iv, 1, 2). The author of this Gospel has throughout a conception of the relation of Jesus to John the Baptizer different from the picture given in Mark and Luke. Matthew represents John as hesitating to baptize Jesus: in this Gospel he does not baptize Him.

[3] See Tertullian, *Concerning Baptism*, § 11 (Eng. Tr. A. Souter, S.P.C.K.).

that anything like that Supper would ever be known again until 'the day' of 'the kingdom of God'. Matthew (xxvi, 26-29) only a little expands some of Mark's phrases. Luke's account of the chief incident of the Supper (Lk. xxii, 14-18) is different, but equally devoid of any suggestion of repetition—for verses 19 and 20 are not part of the Gospel as it was published, but were inserted into it by copyists from 1 Cor. xi, 23-25. So the writers of these Gospels who give us so much of the history of the Life of Jesus and of His teaching do not tell us that He intended His actions at that Supper to be regarded as the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Yet the earliest information we have about Christians (in St Paul's Epistles some twenty years later than the Crucifixion and in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles) shews them as already an organized body of believers in Jesus as the Messiah (the Christ), directed by apostles, and with two specific sacred practices of their own, namely baptism into the name of Jesus (or Christ) and 'the breaking of the bread' or the Lord's Supper: and for both

these practices they believed they had the authority of Jesus Himself.

We cannot fully explain these facts; but we cannot ignore them. We are concerned at present only with the Gospels, and it is enough for us to note that if Jesus prescribed no definite organization for His disciples, yet by what He was and said and did He laid the foundations for the organization of the Church and the ministry and sacraments, which began at once to come into being.

He created the conditions in which this organized body of people and these institutions originated. No one at the time could have foreseen how they would develope, and what they would become. The later history of Church and ministry and sacraments depended from time to time on the political and social institutions and all the changing conditions of the world in which the Church grew up and became an organized world-wide society. So far as we can tell from the evidence of the Gospels it was not part of the mission of Jesus, as He conceived it, to prescribe any hard and fast rules, or any definite constitution,

for a new Christian society or church, to be binding on it for all time. He brought it into being with Himself as centre of it, and He said that in the Spirit He would always be with His disciples. But, in the light of the principles and ideals He had set before them and the way in which He had lived among them, He left it to them age after age to fashion their constitution for themselves. It is in this sense that it is true to say that He founded or instituted the Church and its order of ministry and sacrament.

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